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GUS THE BUS AND EVELYN, THE EXQUISITE CHECKER



GUS THE BUS
AND
EVELYN, THE EXQUISITE CHECKER

By JACK LAIT
AUTHOR OF "BEEF, IRON, AND WINE"



GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1917

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PREFACE

Gus the Bus, at the time of this writing, has appeared on about one hundred consecutive Monday mornings in the Chicago *Herald* and the newspapers served by the Herald syndicate.

In answer to many inquiries it might be not amiss to record that the writer had an individual in mind, a bus boy of his dining acquaintance, but that the incidents are entirely fictional.

The stories were written as part of an everyday program, and have not been revised in text. Each was written on a Sunday afternoon in a newspaper editorial room, and each consumed about an hour in the process.

J. L.

Chicago, 1917



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GUS THE BUS AND EVELYN, THE EXQUISITE CHECKER



I

INTRODUCING GUS THE BUS, OUR HERO, VALET TO SHORTY THE WAITER *AND THE EXQUISITE BLOND CHECKER*

THE bus boy is the dumb, driven ass of commerce. His name is always Nick or Gus. He is the private secretary to a waiter and his pay is $3 a week, less breakage. On the breakage charges alone restaurants have been known to pay 7 per cent. on their investment. So what is left belongs to Nick or Gus, as the case may be, plus 50 cents, which the waiter gives him every Sunday if he has been a good boy.

A busboy never speaks and seldom hears. He has no responsibility toward the public and in turn gets from the public no gratuities, smiles, or even kicks. His ambition is to become a waiter. Bus boys have been known to become waiters, so the lure of the ultimate is always there on the horizon of possibility, and the bus plods on toward the end of the rainbow,

which he always recognizes through its resemblance to a pousse café.

"Bus" is a contraction of "omnibus," and the significance of the name lies in its description of our hero's speed. He is the superannuated boy of vacant visage who serves your fork, knife, napkin, and water. He is not trusted to handle other vintages more priceless than the sluggish blood of his own veins, so he stumbles along on water and rarely gets even a smell of the grape. He is, then, a bhisti, but his Kipling has not yet arisen to pronounce him a better man than the brother he serves.

The bus is a figure that fiction has rarely known, the stage abjures, and the world neglects. The commissary department is not the picturesque end of the daily war, and busing is one matter of soldiering that lends little to literature. Therefore, let us discover the bus and let us name him Gus, for rhyme is the sister of laughter and everybody laughs at him anyway, when any one thinks of him at all.

Gus came from Schleswig-Holstein, which is noted for its output of butter, uhlans, and busboys. How he came nobody knows, and why he came nobody cares.

But this is certain: Gus with the hangdog look and the meaningless identity must have gone through a series of impulses to leave his mother and his putty-faced sister and the colicky baby and the bucolic hovel where he was born. He must have had some purpose in his mind. There is no head so flat that it contains less than one purpose. Even an idiot knows enough to run from a snarling dog. So Gus must have steered a train of thought along the flat, smooth roadbed beneath his hat. Whatever it was, the train brought him here, and in that mysterious way in which strangers find their kind—from thieves and dukes to playwrights and old soldiers—he found some one who could get him appointed as valet to a waiter named Shorty. Just as all buses are named Nick or Gus, all waiters are named Shorty, Baldy, or Hey You, wherefore they are numbered for individual nomenclature.

Gus was given an apron and an alpaca coat that stopped abruptly above the belt—the coat. He bought a celluloid collar that gleamed like the light in your love's witching eye and a tie half an inch wide that lopped down on his washable, reversible, convertible, and incontrovertible dickey, which is a sham and a shame like a stage thundersheet or a profile cow.

Shorty turned him over to a busboy of immemorial experience, who, with a few superior and annoyed looks, gave him the manual of his routine, as follows:

"Report 11:30 for lunch; stand there; them is your tables—them eight over there; whenever a party comes in you wait till Shorty takes the order; if it's a drink order, nothing; if it's a eat order he'll say how many; then you get that many covers. Covers is bread, butter, a napkin, a glass of water, a knife, a fork, a tablespoon, two teaspoons; if it's a oyster cover, bring the little forks and crackers; if it's a lobster cover, bring in the little forks and no crackers; if it's a rarebit he's a cheap skate, so he gets red pepper and don't care if you spill the water; if it's a wine order, bring a bucket-stand and bring it quick. That's all. Report for dinner 5 o'clock and for supper 10:30 o'clock, and keep your thumb out of the water when the customer is looking."

Gus reported and went enthusiastically to his first day's toil. He served oyster forks with wine and crackers with chafing-dish specials, and behaved like an old, experienced bus from the start, thereby winning the admiration of all who knew him, which was nobody.

The luncheon would have been serene and un-

eventful had not it chanced to be the turning point of the whole sluggard, laggard, ragged life of Gus, which is some event, even to a Gus.

The turning point was the checker's desk.

A checker, like a chef, a detective, or a great editor, is a figure of monumental moment in the world who is never seen by the eye of the public. She—if it is a she, as it was this time—sits on a high stool behind a flat shelf somewhere between the firing line in the kitchen and the delivery of the goods to the consumer. The waiters line up before her throne and she sweeps their trays with a glance and punches each item on the check in indelible print. She can tell gin from water by the look on the waiter's face, and charge accordingly. And she can smell mushrooms in a sauce and put the punch into the check.

Gus had to pass her every time he went to and fro for water or with it. He noticed her first, gazing over the main where the pirates were cruising with cargoes of steak and chop, while inditing the bad news into a check with her other hand. That is, the hand on the other side from the side upon which she was gazing on the side.

A good dramatist would have Gus drop the glasses at this point, and thus stay true to his art and find a

reason for having her look at Gus then and there and thus elide detail into an important situation. But he did not drop the glasses. He only trembled and felt his head swimming and all he did was to spill the water all over himself. So he got the look, anyway, and it was a look such as Queen Isabella gave Columbus the first time he said he could find Michigan by sailing toward Palm Beach.

Gus walked out of the passageway backward forty times more during that luncheon to look at her. She was creamy-white, her hair was like butter, her lips were like strawberries, her hands were dimpled dumplings decked with lady fingers, her ears were as little as cherry stones, and her eyes were as brown and liquid as Culmbacher in a crystal stein.

Gus had never seen any one so beautiful. The way she chewed her gum and sassed his boss, Shorty, was exquisite. The lady had charm, manner, and command.

The regular luncheon hour had waned. There were but a few left in the dining room, dawdling over their coffee and cigars and trying to sell each other something, as is the custom at luncheon in the area of the business section. Shorty waved to Gus that he

was "off." He started for the room where he had hung his coat and he saw the checker taking off her paper cuffs, preparatory to her period of leisure. Gus never remembered how he did it—only why he did it—he stepped right to the shelf and, before he knew it, said:

"Charlie Chaplin's funny picher is across from the street. You maybe like to go?"

She stopped chewing her very gum in amazement, recovered herself, flipped off the second cuff, and, as she stepped off her high stool, she answered:

"Why see Chaplin when I've been pipin' you off all mornin', you poor Dutch nut?"

And she walked out with Shorty and left Gus standing there.

II

GUS THE BUS, AS COMIC CAVE MAN STORMS THE EXQUISITE CHECKER

NOW HE HATES SCENARIO WRITERS

GUS THE BUS, chamberlain of the butter tab to His Highness, Shorty the Waiter, came to his dinner trick direct from the movies, where he had spent two hours and two jits. It was a Charlie Chaplin two-reeler. He had seen it through twice.

In the picture was a blond girl, round, chubby, smiling, dimpled, and not so strong on etiquette—just like Evelyn, the exquisite checker in the restaurant, who had greeted him with the fervour of a distant cousin's charity when he had abruptly invited her to go to the pictures with him.

In the picture Chaplin, who wasn't any better dressed than Gus, and who seemed to have no visible means of support at all, had made free with the pretty

girl. She had resented his liberties in the first reel, but he kept right on laughing and putting on his antics—so funny it'd kill you—and gradually she melted until, at the finish, when he boldly pinched her firm cheek, she showed all her white teeth and the picture faded out with his short-sleeved arms around her delicious neck.

To Gus it was both a "hunch" and a prophecy. The women liked that "cave-guy stuff." He had read about it in a German book. But, to make assurance doubly a cinch, attack the woman also in her other weak spot—her sense of humour. The funny fellows always seemed to get there first with the women. He had seen the table comedians and roast-beef "kidders" split the ladies' sides and get all the attention, while the handsome dinner leading man sucked his steak morosely and in silent neglect.

He had hung up his own coat and donned the livery of labour—the dickey, the looking-glass collar, and the monkey jacket.

When he turned toward the outer restaurant Evelyn was just climbing her high stool. He saw a flash of white hose—just what the girl in the picture

had worn, and he saw other round and attractive resemblances in the same look.

It couldn't fail. The girls were as alike as two coffee cups.

Her moist blue eyes turned toward him and his back stiffened. She put her lily hand over her mouth and ha-haed into it. His back limped. He passed her with his head high in air. As he swung open the door he made a bow to it and salaamed, and she laughed aloud. See? It was working.

The next time he passed he had four glasses of water and as many knives, forks, and butters and a bottle of ketchup. He held all the rest in his left hand, balanced nicely and whirled the bottle like an Indian club. The top wasn't screwed on securely and slipped off while he had it on its head, and he spilled a flood of crimson down his funny coat.

Evelyn almost fell from her chair laughing.

He put the things down and scraped off the ketchup, then washed it with a wet napkin and swabbed it with a dry one. Her laughter was uncontrollable.

Great! He had found her weak department.

During the dinner he kept the exquisite checker throbbing and moaning with laughing. He juggled

spoons; he dropped four plates and broke only two of them; he threw a knife in the air and the fourth time caught it and cut his thumb; he threw an oyster cracker on high and nearly caught it in his mouth, but lost it down his neck instead; he did an imitation of Chaplin's stop-and-slide, fell on his face and got a ripping roar for that. It was a success. He was a hit.

Once, as he approached, Shorty, his lord and the man who was Evelyn's choice of all the kitchen cabinet, was getting two club sandwiches and a piece of huckleberry pie punched into a check. He observed Gus's queer actions.

"What's a matter witchou?" asked Shorty. "Tryin' to break a leg?"

"Oh, let him alone," said Evelyn. "The poor nut is trying to be funny. He's a yell."

See? She was taking his part. She was his Portia, pleading his side against the man who a few hours earlier had felt so sure of her. The system was doing its duty. The frigid post-luncheon mitten would be a warm and snuggling little hand in his after the last dinner check had been brought in on a truck and settled.

There remained only the clinching detail of assert-

ing himself in a don't-take-no manner, as Chaplin had, come right through with it and storm Lady Evelyn right off her high-stool throne.

Dinner was over at last. Gus shuffled past Evelyn for the last trip, this time to get his street clothes. She was totalling her checks preparatory to the hour of vacation, which, Gus had planned, she should spend walking with him at the water's edge, talking about—well, he would do the talking and she would hold open her pink ear.

He slipped into his sack coat, but kept on the collar and the deceptive shirt front which deceived nobody. If he was to promenade with a lady along the shore he would have "class." He almost wished he had shined his shoes in the morning, but he hadn't thought of it. No busboy ever does. And he hadn't even seen Evelyn then, so how could he think of it?

With his hat on and his mind made up, he strode toward the checking desk. Evelyn was still bent over her figures. She was biting the rubber tip of her pencil.

Gus came up noiselessly and stood there so close he could have kissed the yellow hair, which was on a level with his chin as she bent over.

He set his feet firmly and squarely, brought up his right arm slowly and struck. His hand curved over and his thumb and finger pinched the pink and powdered cheek right in the dimple.

Evelyn's head flew up. For a moment she seemed stunned. Then she looked squarely at him and reached over and slapped his face with a ringing smack that was heard by everybody through the thin partition closing off the place where the help dressed.

Shorty sprang out.

"What's the riot?" he asked, approaching swiftly.

Evelyn answered in quick monosyllables.

"This nut pinched my cheek. I like his gall. I got a good mind to crack him on the sconce with a beer glass. You do it."

Shorty shoved his two first fingers down Gus's shiny collar and spun him around, face to face.

"Where'd you get that stuff?" he demanded. "D'ye see any sawdust on the floor or anything? Huh?"

And he swung Gus around, not face to face, and planted his good right foot where it caught the tail of the sack coat, but where it would have just missed the extremity of the monkey jacket.

Gus picked himself up at the employes' exit.

"If you come back I'll break your marble dome!" said Shorty. "You're canned. Beat it!"

Gus stumbled out. He was sore at heart and in other vital places. He walked out into the drizzle and the cold world.

Across the street was the picture theatre where he had seen that deceitful, lying picture.

He walked over and looked at a poster of Chaplin with an impudent grin on his face, looking up into the smiling welcome of the plump blond girl's eyes.

Gus tore down the poster, threw it in the mud and jumped on it. Then he ran.

III

GUS THE BUS, BACK ON THE OLD JOB

WINS THE HEAD WAITER

WELCOMED BY THE EXQUISITE CHECKER

"PIGGY" MEYER came to the café after the theatre with a yawning chorus girl.

He was all dressed up. Therefore, when a flute of nice, wet, yellow Pilsener was spilled all over that portion of him which to a regular man would have been his lap, he made lament unto the high heavens and the head waiter. And a moment later Gus the Bus was in a corner explaining how it had happened.

"Shordy said put the budder by the right side and the fork by the left side, and I done it," was his defense.

Shorty the waiter, Gus's master, hustling by with a rarebit, stopped at the mention of his name.

"I fired you after dinner," he said, confronting Gus.

"That's all right," said Gus.

"That rarebit is getting cold," said the head waiter frostily to Shorty, who hurried on to serve it.

"So he fired you, did he?" asked the viceroy.

Gus nodded.

"Oh, he did. Well, you go right back to work. That Shorty is a fresh gink and thinks he's pretty strong with Evelyn, the checker, don't he?"

Gus went back to his post. Shorty met him coming.

"Wha'd I tell you?" demanded Shorty.

"That feller with the long tails over there he says you should get fresh with the checker, he knocks you on the eye," said Gus.

Shorty ran through the door and straight to Evelyn, the exquisite checker.

"Are you double crossing me with that skinny head waiter?" he asked.

"Say," she said. "The next time you try to slip me imported beer for domestic suds on a check you'll be looking cross-eyed at a little envelope with 'Your services are no longer with us' in it. And don't get gay about my love affairs."

Shorty shuffled off muttering as Gus came gaily through the swinging door.

"Hello, Gus," said the checker.

Shorty spun around, and was about to step between them. Gus retreated.

"Say, you bruiser," said the checker. "You let my Gus alone. I guess it's up to me without no assistance from no pickled pigs' feet peddlers. On your way—the kitchen is calling you."

Shorty turned and went along and Gus, seeing him past reaching distance, snuggled to the checker's counter.

"Welcome back," said Evelyn. "I thought you was canned."

"You like me?" asked Gus, his pale little eyes trying to twinkle.

"Like you? Like you?" The exquisite checker sank her alabaster teeth into her gum. "Say, the minute I swung my glimmers on your noble feacher's I knew life never would be the same after that. If you ever combed your hair I couldn't resist you."

"You think I nice, no?" asked Gus.

"Next to Jack Barrymore, kid, you're my ideal," said the exquisite checker.

"Which way you go home?" asked Gus hurriedly.

"Oh," she answered languidly, "in a taxi, usually."

"I mean what way you go," said Gus, slightly dazed.

Evelyn reached over the flat shelf. She spoke very plainly—lucidly:

"Taxi—taxicab—automobile—get me?"

"Oh, automobile," echoed Gus.

"That's it," she added. "You're smart. You made me so quick it set my brain spinning."

"How far?" asked Gus.

"Go as far as you like," said she. Just then she saw Shorty returning, staggering under the weight of a groaning tray. "Sh-h," she cautioned, and Gus reeled on, his head light, his feet heavy.

Through the remainder of the supper trick Gus served salt and pepper with French pastry and carving knives with oysters and watched the clock.

One o'clock, when the doors must be shut, came at last. Gus, with a troubled look upon his doughy features, passed toward his street clothes and met the smiling and fascinating gaze of the exquisite checker.

"Wait," he said, screening the message with the back of his hand.

She nodded encouragement.

Gus seized his hat, threw on his gray sack coat, and

ran through the employes' door to the sidewalk, where stood a row of taxicabs of all classes of lineage, social caste, and commercial classification.

Gus looked them over critically and picked out the most battered and paleozoic one. On the seat a fat miscreant, a seedy cap pulled down over his face, was sprawled, asleep. Gus shoved him. The highwayman awoke.

"Yes, sir," he said, leaping for the crank.

"Wait," said Gus. "How much?"

"How much where?" asked the driver.

"I don't know," said Gus.

"Say—are you kiddin' somebody or what?" bawled the bullnecked driver.

"How much?" repeated Gus.

The driver straightened up, dropped the crank, walked up on the sidewalk and pushed himself front to front with Gus.

"Listen," he said. "You see that there clock?"

"I know," said Gus. "It's 1 o'clock."

"No—that clock ain't for time. That's a meter-a-meter——"

"Right away I meet her," said Gus. "She come from there right away. How much?"

"Whatever it says on that there meter."

"How much it says on the meter? Right now it don's sez nothin'."

"Say—roundhead, that there meter shows how far you drive and it shows how much I gets, see?"

"How can it shows how far I drive when I don't know myself?" asked Gus.

The chauffeur looked him right in his uncertain eye.

"If I t'ought you was tryin' to be funny, I'd slam you on de ear," he said, "but I guess you're nutty. Get outta here."

Just then Gus saw the exquisite checker, with a piquant hat and veil. Gus stepped to her and, with one desperate look as he decided to take a chance with bankruptcy, was about to seize her plump, white arm, when the head waiter shoved him ungently aside, put his arm in Evelyn's, and escorted her to the door of the smartest taxi at the curb.

IV

GUS THE BUS ACHIEVES BIG VICTORY OVER ALIEN ENEMY

BRINGS HOME THE BACON AFTER LUNCH

GUS THE BUS, thwarted in love, thrice a candidate for election to the heart of Evelyn, the exquisite checker, and thrice counted out, read in a German book that woman can withstand anything but neglect. Hell had no fury, said the book, like a woman left flat.

As he passed her the first time after the incident in which the lanky head waiter had come off winner in all save the price of the taxi, Gus walked past the checker's desk without deigning her a look. He was whistling. Nothing exasperates a woman nearly as much as to hear bad whistling from a bleeding heart, when she knows right well that the writhing victim's soul is chanting a dirge. Evelyn struck a "don't-make-me-laugh" expression, but Gus saw none of it—except out of the corner of his eye.

The meal was luncheon. No unusual mishaps in kitchen or dining room marked its progress. Once when a customer ordered Bokert water Gus brought him back a bucket of water. But nothing unusual happened.

Shorty, the overlord who guided Gus's comings and goings (so to speak), drew him aside during a lull and commiserated with him.

"Say—nut," said Shorty. "You run in my class. I seen that throwdown the blonde slipped you and I'm here to tell you that if a fine, strapping lad like you lets that spike-tail gyraft get away with it, then all I says is youse Dutch ain't such fighters as the papers says."

Gus shrugged his flimsy shoulders.

"Nut," continued Shorty. "Has it come under your personal glim that this here head-waiter guy is French? Huh? Have you give that there any thought? Huh? You're a loyal Uhlong, you are. Your Kaiser and country need you."

Gus threw out his hands with little meaning.

"Ain't they no fight in you?" Shorty pressed on.

"Sure," said Gus. "But not now."

"Well, then, I tell you. After lunch you ketch this

here skinny dude out in the dressing-room and you wallop him. Fight him out where Evelyn can get a good look. Have a bottle handy, see? What the women loves is a hero."

"No," said Gus. "It don't give that way in the book."

"A hero," repeated Shorty. "I tell you that's the system. Say—don't you remember when I kicked you out? Didn't Evelyn sit there like Nero with her thumb down?"

"Her t'umb wass down so the checks they wouldn't fly away," said Gus, with keen recollection.

"Go 'way," said Shorty. "She says to me that night, she says: 'Shorty, you're a man,' that's what she says. Now how'd you like for her to put that there little white, fat hand on that there shoulder o' yourn an' look down in your fishy eyes an' say to you, 'Gus, dearest, you're a man, that's what you are?' Huh? Guess that there'd be bad, huh?"

"I try first my way," said Gus. "I don' look on her. She should dance on the checking table; she should roll on the floor like a dinner bun—she should do any something she likes—I don' look on her."

A customer was rapping his glass with the blade of his knife and Shorty hustled away.

When the waiter passed the tollgate with a plate of steaming stew a minute later, he whispered to Evelyn:

"I got his system. He ain't gonna give you a tumble—not a look, see? He's gonna freeze you dead."

"Listen," said Evelyn. "If that there Dutch biscuit-bounder thinks he can break my heart like he breaks all the firm's crockery, he's crazier'n the guy what makes up them new names for French pastries. Let 'im rave on, Shorty. Let 'im rave on."

Shorty hurried back and whispered to Gus:

"She says why don't you come over and say good morning or somethin'? Say—you got her wingin'. You was right, all right, all right. Keep it up. I'm bettin' on you an' anybody thinks you ain't gonna win out kin git rich offen me on a dime."

"I got a dime," said Gus.

"You don' make me," said Shorty. "What I says is you're gonna win out. You're gonna take Evelyn like Grant took Richmond."

"I don' know what is it," said Gus, "but t'anks."

Lunch, like all things mortal and mundane, must pass away. So the hour of its serving waned and the dining room became desolate. It was raining miser-

ably outside. Ordinarily he would have remained indoors and played pinochle with the other busboys. But love demands many sacrifices and it demanded of him that he go forth—somewhere, anywhere. He must not be where it might be suspected that he was "sucking around" for a smile or a word from the exquisite checker. He would go out. That would show her how very much he hated her—that he preferred wet feet to any suspicion of cold feet.

As he struck the swinging door from the room the head waiter hailed him—the lank, French head waiter who had stolen Evelyn from him into a taxicab—his enemy by birth, station, and circumstances.

"Bus," said the head waiter.

Gus sprang to serve him. That is, had he not been flat-footed, he would have sprung. He stumbled, which brought him there, anyway.

"Bus," said the head waiter. "Here's some lunch for the checker. She's staying in on account of the rain. Take this lunch to her. And slip her this note," handing Gus a folded bit of paper.

The system died right there.

Gus marched to the checker's desk and served the plate, the bowl, the cup and saucer, the salt and pepper, the knife, fork, and spoon—and the note.

Evelyn smiled winsomely at him and thanked him. His face was frozen.

"Wait a minute," she purred, opening the note. She read it, her fair blond brow contracting.

"Take this back to that spindle-pinned bull merchant and tell 'im it's a good thing he wrote it instead of saying it, or I would 'a' busted this plate on his mush. He's got a lot o' gall, that mutt."

Gus took the note she handed him, and read:

"I send you some luncheon—and a kiss."

"What d'ye think o' that?" demanded the exquisite checker.

"It's nice lunch?" asked Gus.

"The lunch is all right," said Evelyn. "But did you get that coarse work for dessert?"

"I can't help what he sends—I got to bring it," said Gus.

"Sure—I understand that," said the checker. "If he sends it you got to deliver it."

So Gus, just as the head waiter opened the door a tiny crack to peep in and see what effect his note had had, reached his long arms up, encircled the exquisite checker's plump, white neck, drew her head down, and delivered what the head waiter had sent, squarely on—and all over—her berry lips.

When she worked herself loose Gus stood mute, aghast at his own bravado.

"That's the only thing you ever delivered without spilling some of it," said Evelyn.

V

GUS THE BUS ESCAPES CAFÉ SHYLOCKS

SAVES $3.80 OUT OF $3

EXQUISITE CHECKER ENACTS PORTIA

"GUS," called Evelyn the Exquisite Checker, and Gus the Bus hurried his flat-footed shuffle to respond.

"C'm here, I want to tell you something," she said as he came near, and Gus bent his head over the checking shelf to drink in sweet words from the honeyed lips.

"Shorty the Waiter tells me that him and that there French head waiter is gonna take three dollars and eighty cents outta your pay for them dishes Shorty breaks the other day. Are you gonna stand for it?"

"What I can do?" asked Gus.

"Make a holler—get up on your hind legs and roar, you jackass—let out a scream—throw a dish—do somethin'. You ain't gonna stand here and let those grafters get away with nearly four dollars o'

your kale, are you? For something you never done?"

"Who I speak?" said Gus.

"The boss—the high guy—over there in that private office. Go on in and tell him how it happened. Tell him I seen it if he wants to know any more. Go on."

Gus went to the door of the café office and knocked. On word from within he entered. A stout man with a cigar between his jaws turned in a revolving chair and faced him. Gus felt himself sinking. He stood whittling his thumb with his finger.

"Well?" said the owner.

Gus cleared his throat.

"Mister I come by you Shorty he takes me from the wages three dollar mit eighdy cent."

"How can he take three dollars and eighty cents from your wages when your wages are only three dollars?" asked the manager.

"I know ain't," said Gus. "Only the checker she tells me."

"Oh," said the manager. "Is Evelyn kicking up a fuss again? Ask her in here."

Gus hurried back and brought Evelyn with him.

"Good morning," said the exquisite one. "What's on your chest?"

"This comedian tells me you tell him to tell me somebody is going to take $3.80 out of his $3."

"That's the goods," she said.

"How can it be done?"

"Easy," said Evelyn. "Don't you get $4 out of 30 cents' worth of steak?"

The proprietor started a stern look, then slipped and gave ground.

"But, all kiddin' aside," added Evelyn, "Shorty and that there Frogs' Legs is framin' to make a bum out o' this harmless nut. Shorty busts about 40 cents' worth o' crockery an' the head waiter wants to make Gus settle three eighty."

"Which meets with your disapproval?"

"My what? It don't meet with nothin'. It don't go, that's all."

"What do you want me to do about it?"

"I want you," said Evelyn, "to tell them lunk-heads that if they don't stop pickin' on this here freckle-nosed youth I'm gonna cut loose an' crown em over the dome wit' a suds-stein. You don' know what's been goin' on around here. This here ruin is a reg'lar Captain Dreyfus, the way them highbinders

keeps kickin' him around, an' all becus he likes me."

The employer looked at Gus and laughed.

"Tell that head waiter I want to see him," said he, and Gus went.

With a look of annoyed dignity Antoine came.

"Look here," said the chief. "Evelyn tells me that you and Shorty are discriminating against this moron How about it?"

The head waiter shrugged his shoulders.

"It is news to me," he began.

"It is, is it?" interjected Evelyn. "Well, maybe it's news to you that you're a long-legged double-crosser, too. Did you or didn't you soak Gus for three eighty breakage?"

"Why, yes—that is——"

"Did you see him break anything?"

"No, but Shorty——"

"That's it," said Evelyn. "Shorty busts them dishes. He takes a flop tryin' to give me the soft an' insinuatin' up an' down. I seen him. Now they wasn't half a dollar's worth o' dishes in the lot. But you call it $3.80 worth, an' now you can stick to that price—because Shorty and not this helpless boob is gonna pay it, see?"

The head waiter addressed himself to his superior:

"What this lady say, it is something I do not know. Shorty is the boss from this busboy, and Shorty he reports to me that this busboy he break for three dollars and eighty cents dishware. So I charge to this boy such amount."

"Well, this boy don't kick in such amount," said Evelyn decisively.

The head waiter turned and looked her over icily. Then he turned back to the landlord and spoke, likewise icily:

"I like to inquire," he said, "if this woman run the café or if am I yet in charge."

The owner smiled.

"This woman," he said, "is not running the café and you are yet in charge. That answers your question. But I want to add this: I would trust her and believe her over any one else in this whole place, because I know she doesn't butt in where she has no business to, because I know she's on the level with me and w th the whole world, and because I know that she has a sound head and right heart."

Evelyn bowed low, came up smiling, and stuck her tongue out at the head waiter.

"Shorty," continued the manager, "will be charged with $3.80 for breakage. If he pleads that that is excessive I shall discharge some one. If it is excessive for him it surely is for this poor immigrant yokel. If Shorty pays it without protest I shall put forty cents into the treasury of the company and spend the rest buying a big box of candy for our pretty checker. How does that strike you?"

The head waiter bowed stiffly, turned, gave Evelyn a freezing look, gave Gus a hot flash of hatred and resentment, and retired.

"Thanks—you're a prince," said Evelyn.

"That's all right—any time you see anything going on here that meets with your disapproval, you let me know," said the boss.

Evelyn turned to Gus, who had been standing with his eyes first on the proprietor, then on Evelyn, between fear, fascination, amazement, and gratitude in turn.

"C'mon, blunderbus; victory once more smiles upon you. I don't see how victory could help it if she seen the funny look on your map."

The restaurateur laughed aloud.

"Did you ever hear of Portia?" he asked Evelyn.

"No," said Evelyn. "Is it on the menu?"

Outside the office Evelyn and Gus saw Shorty and the head waiter in feverish consultation. The head waiter tried to be emphatic, but Shorty was clearly indignant.

"All right," said Shorty. "Kick in a dollar ninety. It's your love affair as much as mine."

VI

GUS THE BUS THERE IN THE PINCH

DYING TO BE USEFUL

BREAKS FOUR HEARTS FOR A QUARTER

"HELLO in? Hello in what?" said Gus the Bus to Evelyn the Exquisite Checker.

"Hello in nothin'," said she. "Halloween —Halloween—don't they have Halloween in Germany?"

"No," said Gus. "We don't have nothings only Germans."

"Listen, blunderbus," said the cream-and-sugar one. "Halloween is a holiday. It's the day the kids puts on pillow-slips and is ghosts, and the bigger jackasses, who is too grown up to pull gates off o' hinges an' smear soap on windows what ain't used to it, comes to cafés and gets their own pun'kinheads lit up. See?"

"No," said Gus.

"I didn't think you would," said Evelyn.

The café was decorated with black cats, transparent squashes, and profile witches. There was an unusually large gathering after the theatre and folks started to drink midnight wine ahead of schedule.

Gus's detail included six tables. At one was a party of four men—at another, one man and two girls. Gus slopped water about, put butter where sleeves couldn't miss it, and stepped on many a foot. It takes a bigger crowd than usual to make a busboy more so.

At the table of the four men sat a dramatic critic, a novelist, a humourist, and a librettist. If this be fiction, make the most of it—they were supping luxuriously.

At the other table sat a male person who scarcely seemed to belong. He looked like a wrestler—or a ploughboy. He had a black pompadour and was cuffless. He laughed at the wrong time and he had on a tan waistcoat.

The librettist saw him as a musical comedy yokel; the humourist looked at the cut of his trousers and said "pegtop—also, peg the bottom"; the dramatic critic poohed and said the gawk wasn't as polished as the average Broadway leading man, even; the novelist thought him a chapter on what a

woman would not want and no fit subject for two women to have between them.

The reason was simple. Sitting at the rummy's right hand was about the prettiest girl since Evangeline.

She wore a shiny hat with an inverted flower pot crown, a greenish blue velvet suit trimmed with the dearest brown fur, and patent leather booties with white tops. She had hair as black as the critic's soul and lips as scarlet as the librettist's crimes and a glance as elusive as the humourist's points and teeth as glistening as the novelist's inconsistencies.

Her every move was a picture, her every gesture a dream, her every smile the awakening of a perfect morn, her every little girlish trick of fascination like a sunbeam on a fountain.

The librettist noted all these things. So did the novelist, the humourist, and the critic.

Glibly unconscious of the neglect she had brought upon the costly viands at the round-table of the knights of the typewriter and the pun, she ran on, listening to the goof at her left, laughing with the other pretty girl at his left. Her back was turned to the other table. But on the side wall of the café

was a large mirror. In this the writers could see her. And in this, after a while, she saw them. And no girl ever saw what she saw without immediately knowing what she immediately knew—that they were looking at nothing else.

There wasn't a scribbler at the table who wouldn't have given his pet paragraph to her or for her. But they were gentlemen, and flirting is not a gentleman's way when the lady has beside her a bumpkin who looks like a wrestler.

No line of communication looked likely. The gentlemen had all read—yes, written—of romances in which eyelash messages were exchanged, a dropped kerchief brought two loving souls together, or, at least, the dragon who guarded the fair maiden had been called to the telephone long enough for a shot by chance or a wild try against probable bull's-eye results.

It was most interesting and least satisfying. The beauty now was quite conscious of the adoring attention from the other table via the mirror. She glanced into it through the corner of her fascinating eye. At times the writers even fancied she smiled—just a trifle—and, of course, each knew the smile was for him. The escort, too, caught the idea. And his looks, too, were for them.

Gus waddled about, industriously getting into every one's line of vision. The spirit of halloween had possessed him, though he knew nothing of what it was all about, and his freckled face wore an illuminated grin as though it didn't hurt a bit.

About midnight Gus served a new dish that he didn't know much about. The head waiter had given him an armful of weird little rubber things that looked like dried prunes. But, to his surprise, every one else seemed to know what the things were for, and in a moment he, too, knew—they were balloons.

The grown folks blew up the dried prunes and soon the whole café was alive with loud laughter and hundreds of sensible men and sensible women—men and women, anyway—were batting balloons, tennis-fashion, laughing boisterously over the strange air currents that carried the toys offside and holding their ears against the manifestations of that jolly dog who puts the lighted end of his cigarette against a balloon to hear the pop.

The pretty girl looked even prettier with a blue balloon dancing on and off her superlative hand. Her smile was radiant, her eyes were crackling, her animated oval face flushed pink and white in the childish excitement of shuttle-cocking the weight-

less bubble to and from the other girl—the one who was pretty, but only human—and herself, with occasional clumsy interference by the catch-as-catch-can boor sitting between them.

The quartette of writers watched her play with more interest than they could have given a world's championship baseball match or a football fray between the old Maroon and the dear old Purple. Each time her gentle hand wafted the balloon back each of them moved with her. Every time she juggled it to get purchase for the return each of them joggled.

Once or twice the balloon almost escaped the tips of her fingers, in which event it would have flitted right over her head and onto the table, where sat the admiring four. Each time that it nearly did but didn't the four heaved a sigh and looked guiltily at each other, each reading the deepest thoughts of the other.

The game waxed hot. The pink of the pretty one's cheeks grew deeper. Her smile became more intoxicating. The writers leaned forward and were frankly and shamelessly interested in the play. Their suppers were cold, their wine was flat.

The other girl finally caught the spirit of it all and saw the point. Three times she tried by main force to bat the balloon past her pulchritudinous vis-à-vis, but the thing was so light that it refused to go out of bounds. The fourth time it came to her served high. The girl half rose to her feet and slapped the blue balloon, fairly amidships. The pretty girl rose to arrest it, but it curved and sailed out of her reach, squarely onto the centre of the table where sat the literary incandescents of the town.

With one lunge the four reached for the balloon. But a fifth arm was extended. It wore black, rusty alpaca. It was the arm of Gus the Bus. His hand closed triumphantly on the balloon, he grinned like a hippopotamus, and, before any one could knock him down or shoot him or stab him with a table knife, he had swung about and placed the balloon in the hand of the charmer.

The cuffless escort gave Gus 25 cents.

VII

GUS THE BUS IRRITATES ROYAL PAIR

EVELYN SALUTES THE QUEEN

EFFECTS IMPROVE FLAVOUR OF THE WINE

"SAY," said Gus the Bus, "them new dancers makes me a get-fresh right away. Never they tip and always I should run for them to the drug store and buy for the face paint and for the feet powder. What are they, anyway, for a new business here?"

"Shh," said Evelyn the Exquisite Checker. "The boss thinks they're the topnotch, blond-haired babies. They gets five hundred a week."

"Go on," said Gus the Bus. "Von Hindenburg don't get that much."

The café had installed a pair of ballroom spinners who gave languid and superior exhibitions between after-the-theatre and before-the-night-car. Having been born, respectively, in Syracuse and Stevens

Point, they talked broken English with ally flavour, wore extreme evening clothes, and at their table jeered at the populace in such a discreet manner that nobody noticed it except the guests and the help.

When the orchestra struck up for their turn the "gent" arose first and helped the airy female to her feet as though he were performing one of the miracles. Then he gave her a look which said: "Oh, I suppose we must go through this again for these gawks," to which her eyes replied: "They won't understand it anyway. But I suppose——"

At the conclusion of each dance, as he threw a veil about her white and powdered naked shoulders to protect her from the steam of a near by finan haddie, Shorty the Waiter rushed over with a pitcher of champagne-cup and poured into two glasses, whereupon the dancers looked at each other over the bubbling goblets and shook their heads as if to say: "Fancy such cheap champagne." Until 1914 they had done pretty well on beer.

The dance had just concluded, and it was well that it had, for the thin lady was half asleep. She was guided to her chair and the wine was poured and the veil was about her bony superstructure.

She raised the piffling wine glass to her lips, tasted a toothful with the tip of her tongue, rubbed the tongue against her lips to get the taste to the finest distinction, and set down her glass.

"Tastes like tinfoil," she said.

"Abominable," answered he.

She raised her finger. Shorty was in the kitchen, so Gus skated over to answer the call.

"What brand of wine is in this, boy?" she asked.

"Wine," said Gus.

"I know that—at least I know it is what is called wine in this cheap dive," said the lady, as any lady would. "But what I wish to know is the particular brand—kind—name—label——"

"I find out," said Gus, and he skated out past the swinging door.

To Evelyn the Exquisite Checker he told of the conversation.

"Go back and tell that dyin' hoofer she gets the finest imported California grape that the joint carries an' if she don't like it she can bring her own wine from home," said Evelyn.

Gus returned.

"The checker says," said he, "is the wine the

bestest we got it and if you don't like some you don't have to drink."

"Who said that?" demanded the dancer.

"The checker—Eflyn—out there."

The dancer arose and wafted toward the door. She opened it and looked about her. She saw Evelyn sitting behind her shelf.

"Are you the checker?" she asked.

"That's me—ask anybody," said Evelyn.

"What do you mean?" demanded the dancer. "What do you mean by sending that idiot to me with an insolent message? I shall have you discharged. I shall——"

Evelyn stuck her pencil in her hair.

"Just a minute," she said. "Now you don't look very well and strong and it'd be a shame for me to spill you all over this here presin't. Now you trot right back to the little charity table where you an' that there sickly spieler o' yourn gets your cakes an' your booze, or I'll knock you right out f'm under that there funny false hair o' yours. Now beat it before I come aroun' this counter."

The dancer was shocked—mortified—flabbergasted.

"Why, I never——" she began. "I shall——"

By that time Evelyn had circumnavigated the end of the checking table and stood face to face with her.

"Listen, Lizzie," said Evelyn. "This here duchess game is all right for them boobs what comes here to see you trot. But it don't go back here in the servants' quarters. See? You ain't the first queen o' the ballroom what's been here an' don't kid yourself you'll be the last, neither. Now go back like a good child an' sop your liquor. I don't want no trouble back here, 'cause I pride myself on keepin' things neat an' reg'lar."

"I shall report this to the proprietor instantly," said the butterfly.

"Instantly is right," said Evelyn, "so you'd better start before it's too late," and she stepped over and held open the door.

The dancer, chin in air, wafted out as Evelyn bowed low and curtsied to the floor.

The dancer swept across the room into the proprietor's office. She caught her breath once or twice, held her throat with her jewelled hand, and said:

"This is an outrage!"

The boss looked up.

"First I am insulted by that red-headed monkey that helps the waiter at our table. Then I am threatened by that blond woman—that common thing outside the door—and——"

"Oh, Gus the Bus and Evelyn the Exquisite Checker," said the proprietor. "Now you don't want to quarrel with them. They are the joy of my life and the salt in the stew of my existence."

"I shall resign immediately unless they are both discharged," said the dancer, stamping her foot.

"That lets you out," said the overlord. "I wouldn't lose Gus and Evelyn for Terpsichore and Mordkin. Shall I——"

"Very well," said the dancer. "We will remain. If you can afford to employ impudent servants I suppose we can endure it, also."

"That's the spirit," said the proprietor. "Thanks for calling my attention to it," and he arose and opened the door and held it open and bowed low as she flounced out into the café.

Gus, who had waited in trepidation for the result, hunched over toward the table as the dancer re-

turned. Her partner gallantly arose and, with his finger-tips, helped her into her seat.

"What did they say?" he asked languidly.

"It's all right," said she. "H—he said it was Mumm's."

VIII

GUS THE BUS LANDS SWELL BARGAIN

$300 DIAMOND FOR $12

EXQUISITE CHECKER STRONG FOR GEMS

GUS THE BUS was wandering and wondering. Christmas was but a few days off and there was Evelyn the Exquisite Checker to be cared for. Gus's heart longed for means to shower her with necklaces and bracelets, boxes of warm woollen stockings, combs set with bright stones for her hair, and handkerchiefs with big initials.

He wished that he were rich, like the head waiter. He'd show them. He'd cover Evelyn with costly wear and cut-glass jewellery and no checker in town would have anything on her for splendour.

But he was poor. He had $27 saved up, of which $12 was in his pocket.

As he walked along he became aware of a stranger drawing close to him, walking the same way. He

was a man of evil visage, unshaven and poorly clad. His hat was pulled down upon his eyebrows and the features that showed were coarse and wicked.

Gus was just about to let him pass when the stranger sidled up, looked up and down to see that no one observed him, and took Gus by the arm.

"Listen, cull," said the stranger. "I'm gonna trust you, you look honest."

"Huh?" said Gus, pretty much afraid.

"Don't pull away," said the stranger. "C'mere," and he led Gus into a near-by doorway, the busboy too shaky to resist.

"Listen," said the man, maneuvering Gus into a corner and blocking the way out. "I'm gonna let you in on a soft thing."

"I don't know," said Gus.

"You don't know what? Listen. I'm a (and he looked up and down carefully) I'm a crook."

The man looked up to see what impression that had made. It had made none.

"I'm a thief," he said. "A burglar—a gun—a grifter—I steal things."

"Oh," said Gus, starting for the street.

"Nix," said the man. "Don' git scared. I

ain' gonna steal nuttin' from you. I'm gonna give you somethin'."

"No," said Gus.

"Sure," said the man. "Listen. The bulls is after me, see?"

"I don't know," said Gus.

"The bulls—cops—police! They wants me, see? I stole a lot o' junk—a lot o' jewlery. Now listen close. I got a di'mon' ring in my kick—in this here pocket, see? It's wort' t'ree hundred bucks. T'ree hundred dollars, see?"

"No," said Gus.

"Well," said the man, "here it is," and he looked up and down the street and drew carefully from his pocket a little wad of tissue paper. He unwound it and took forth a solitaire.

"That there is wort' t'ree hundred clams," said the man.

Gus's eyes opened wide. The ring was a beauty.

"I ain't got it t'ree hundred thaler," he said.

"No," said the man. "Y'see, them coppers is after me pretty t'ick. If dey ketches me wit' dis here glimmer on me, I goes to stir. I wanna git it offen me. How much you got?"

"I got twelf thalers," said Gus.

"I'll take it," said the man.

Gus was not to be taken in. He reached first for the ring, which the man surrendered reluctantly. Gus reached into his pocket and drew out his $12, which he surrendered eagerly. The man took a look at the bills, looked up and down the sidewalk hastily, stepped out and was gone.

Gus's heart was beating fast. In his pocket he felt the ring over and over. He was afraid to pull it out lest it attract the attention of the police or the man it was stolen from or some one who would steal it now or any one Gus ran to his room, lit the gas, and took out the ring. He held the sparkler up to the light and it flashed and spat fire. It certainly was a beauty. Evelyn would have the swellest diamond ring that any checker ever had. Santa Claus had come to him in evil guise and his whiskers were the wrong colour. But he had come. And he had left a $300 ring for $12.

Gus tried the ring on. It was large. It was easy on his third finger. He knew that Evelyn's pretty hands were much smaller than his, and, though her fourth finger was plump, it was not as thick as his. The ring would have to be made smaller, that was certain.

Gus wrapped it up in the tissue paper again and started out. He held his hand in his pocket and the ring in his hand, closed tight.

He looked into two jewellery stores, but they looked little and unreliable, not to be trusted with valuable diamonds. The temptation might be too much. So he clung to the ring until he came to a big jewellery store with thousands upon thousands of dollars' worth of gems in the window and he walked in.

He shuffled to a counter where a neat young man stood picking his nails with a silver file. Gus breasted the counter, dug up his tissue paper, unrolled the ring, and held it across to the clerk.

The clerk looked it over and laid it on the glass counter.

"Well?" said the clerk.

"I want him made smaller the ring," said Gus. "For a lady."

The clerk picked up the ring again and looked at it again.

"It will cost you 75 cents," said the clerk.

"All right," said Gus. "When he is finished?"

"Well," said the clerk, "I don't know whether it would pay you to have us monkey with this at all."

"Huh?" asked Gus.

"You see," said the clerk, "it would cost you 75 cents to have this ring cut down. You can buy a better one the size you want for 50 cents."

It took the clerk five minutes to make Gus understand.

"It's—it's ain't a diamond?" Gus asked.

"Chunk of glass," said the clerk.

"But the man he steals him," gasped Gus.

"You poor nut," said the clerk, and he filliped the ring back to Gus.

"Say, blunderbus," said Evelyn the Exquisite Checker. "Y'know what I'm gonna get for Christmas?"

Bus shook his head.

"A diamond solitary," said Evelyn.

"Who gives you?" asked Gus.

"Oh—a guy—a swell guy you don' know," said Evelyn. "He's been tryin' to win me for a year. I didn't have no much use fer 'im at first. But when they begins talkin' diamonds—well, diamonds sounds pretty good, hey?"

"And some of they looks pretty good," said Gus. "But you look out. Maybe it ain't a real diamond."

"You should worry," said the exquisite. "Any rum can tell a phony spark. Anyway, this guy ain't none o' that kind. He's dippy over me, he is, and he owns a paint store."

The fat man in the corner who slobbered up the full little vessel of cocktail sauce with his cotuits will never know that one of Gus's tears went with it.

IX

GUS THE BUS AT THE MIDNIGHT UPLIFT

CONVOYED BY EXQUISITE ONE

EVELYN SAVES THE DAY LATE AT NIGHT

"GUS," said Evelyn the Exquisite Checker, as they came out through the help's entrance after the bang and rattle of the post-show collation in the café, "did you ever make them all-night movies?"

"I don't make no movies," said Gus the Bus. "I'm lucky if I make expenses."

"I mean," said Evelyn, "did you ever take in them films what runs all night for the waiters, the pick-pockets, and the newspaper men?"

"I didn't take in no movies," said Gus. "I took in forty cents to-night, but——"

"Oh, c'mon, blunderbus," said Evelyn and she took our hero by the arm and led him to the illuminated front of the neverclose carnival of swatstick and tears. A painted streamer outside read "The Wo-

man Pays," but it was Gus who laid down the twenty cents and took the two perforated reel-tickets.

The air within was heavy and thick. The unseen operator was grinding out a five-part tragedy that flickered along with its tense emotions and quick changes of plot, half seen by the relaxed newsboys, chauffeurs, policemen, printers, night-owls, and just plain bums who lopped over the arms of their chairs, some of them almost asleep and the others quite.

Evelyn selected two seats on an aisle midway down. She seated herself inside, while Gus Gibraltared her from the strait of entrance.

"Ain't she beautiful?" said Gus as a farmer's only daughter with curls twisting to her hip bounced buoyantly on the screen and was met by the city chap in puttees and a derby hat, whose plans for her destruction were all made, all right, all right.

"Forty if she's a day," said Evelyn. "The way these here old ladies get to be enginoos is one o' the big triumpherates o' motion pichers. Do you know how old Mary Pickford is? Well, I guess Sarah Bernstein ain't got nothin' on her. An' she comes gallopin' in, playin' kid parts, an' the travellin' men an' others what's got a right to have better sense falls for it and says: 'Cutie.'"

"I donno about it something," said Gus.

"I suspected as much," said Evelyn.

Scene after scene unreeled and they became engrossed in the unwinding of the story. On the seat behind a hobo was snoring, his limp arm hanging over almost to the floor swinging inanely. In a corner not far away two street boys with their caps on were slumbering, their dirty little heads propped against each other. Across the aisle sat a fat man with a cold cigarette between his jaws, his head down with his chin on his protuberant breast, asleep with an annoyed expression on his features.

"What is this here?" said Evelyn. "A theatre or a flop? Huh? If these here people what own the joint would furnish coffee an' a sinker in the mornin' they'd get a bigger play, maybe. How the old world does keep movin'. Nowadays you can get a kip an' highclass entertainment in the heart o' the great metropolice all for a single silver dime. For seventy cents a week you have a permanent address, a place to receive your mail, an' passin' in review before your closed eyes the wonders o' the world o' the screen. Huh, bus?"

"Sure," said Gus.

"I ain't keepin' you up with my flow o' language, or anything," said Evelyn with concern.

"Oh, no," said Gus. "I was nearly asleep already, anyhow."

The scraggly vagabond on the seat behind, whose ponderous snoring was so distinct that one could scarcely see the pictures listening to him, shifted a bit and his head fell forward, nestling on Evelyn's back, in the plump valley between her shoulder blades. It was warm and yielding and he sighed deeply with a moment's contentment.

A moment only it was, for Evelyn, with an aggravated look, pulled forward and his head, left without support, slipped sharply down, and his nose struck the edge of the chair-back. He grunted, groaned, and rolled his head so that his skull instead of his face nestled on the quarter-inch of bed, and went to sleep again.

"Gus," said Evelyn, shaking him by the arm. "Push that panhandler's knob offen my chair. Wait—put your gloves on first."

Gus slid his hand along the back of the bench, gingerly and unsteadily. It reached the head. He tried to fillip it off, but it was too solidly grounded. He pushed a little harder with no results. He

kneeled on his chair, leaned his weight and with a sudden heave propelled the head from its lodging. For a second it swung in midair at the end of the lax body. Then it pulled up and backward with a start and the furry face of a vagrant hobo opened its eyes and looked with sinister threat into the pale blue blinkers of Gus the Bus.

The man dragged his husky body to its feet, his brain beginning to assimilate impressions in the process. He reached down and over, slipped his fingers between Gus's collar and his skin and yanked the bus upright into his chair with a powerful pull.

"You li'l rat," growled the tramp. "Where d'ye get that pokin' a party's nut when he's tryin' to see a pichury?"

Gus wriggled, caught his breath, looked to Evelyn, wriggled some more.

"I got a mind to break ye in half, ye sawed-off hyena," said the tramp, taking up another fistful of the back of Gus's coat in his grip.

Evelyn arose. In her right hand was her purse, a steel-mesh affair swinging on a short chain.

"That'll be all from you," said she.

The tramp turned, looked her up and down.

"I wasn' talkin' to you, lady," said he.

"No, but I'm talkin' to you, you overgrown barrel-house loafer. Let go that boy's collar."

"I gotta mind to hit him just once for luck," said the hobo.

"There'll be two hits if you start anything," said Evelyn, swinging back her purse for action, "when I hit you an' when you hit the floor."

The tramp sat down.

"C'mon, Gus," said Evelyn. "This here ain' no place for us. I guess we made a mistake," and Gus arose and they started for the door.

The tramp stood and blocked their path, but there was no assault in his eye.

"Lady," said he, "I wanna let it out to you that I've met a lot of 'em, but you are the double-barrelled bearcat o' the flock. I didn' know he was wit' you or I wouldn't 'a' started somethin'."

"That's all right," said Evelyn. "If a guy wan's to fight that's his priv'lidge. I got nothin' against you for that. But you oughtn' to start on poor, little Gus here when I'm in the party. C'mon, Gus —we better be beatin' it."

X

GUS THE BUS GOES FLYING TO RESCUE OF EXQUISITE CHECKER

PENT-UP NEW YEAR BUBBLES EXPLODE

IT'S by you here in Amerika such a funny holiday this heppy New York," said Gus the Bus.

"It's the biggest night that ever brung a mornin' after," said Evelyn the Exquisite Checker.

"What is it for a style," said the bus, "Peoples should get themselves besoffen with tchampagne when I know it they like much better beer, huh?"

"Go on," said the exquisite one. "Nobody but a piker drinks suds on New Year's eve. Say—it's the only chancet most guys gets to flood their carburetor and lubricate their intake with the grape. You fawraners don' know what manners is."

"Anyway," said Gus, "it's a fine night for the boss. My, was here lots from peoples for heppy New York. And was they dressed opp. Peoples I see

them every night I don' know them with the fency shirts und the stiff collars. If I had like that clothings I wouldn' wait for one night, huh? Effery night would I wear it."

"I'd like to make you, all harnessed up like a plush horse," said Evelyn. "I bet you'd be nifty, especially if you combed your hair."

Gus skidded out into the dining room. He had worked very late, helping to clear away the wreckage and the breakage and the gentlemen who insisted on sleeping under the cashier's counter.

Gus was not a drinking man. But where so much wine had flowed no saint could have weathered it immune. What had trickled through his pores was enough to wobble his gait.

He met Shorty, standing against a post, the limp towel draped over his forearm hanging down in reckless disorder, his eyes closed, and his stubby form relaxed and ready to sink.

The head waiter was dragging his feet across the room with his steps creepy and his eyes bloodshot. Had anybody sneezed heartily half the waiters in the room would have fainted.

There were a few patrons. but they were listless

and unconcerned. They read the blurred menus, tossed them lackadaisically on the cloths, and said: "I think a plate of hot soup would brace me up—and bring my coffee black."

The proprietor hadn't come down at all. The doorman had reported sick. The yegg in the check-room hadn't enough energy to whisk a dime out of a man from the country or offer a dude the talcum. One guest was asleep at a table in the middle of the room, his chin on his hand.

The telephone was ringing and nobody answered it and nobody cared. There was lethargy, inactivity, and hangover hanging over all.

Gus saw the débris of an early diner's meal, half tasted and deserted, at one of his tables.

He picked up a tray and on it he piled the metal soup tureen, the silverware, the plates, the tumbler, the cup and saucer, and the knickknacks.

It was a hefty load. Gus braced himself, reached out, heaved and got the tray half way into perpendicular at the end of his arm when his best foot, which was forward, shot out under the table and Gus lit in a sitting position.

The tray and all it carried shot over his left shoulder and struck on the tiled floor. There was a clang of metal followed by a crash of china and the rattle of small arms.

Shorty jumped two feet. The head waiter straightened up and grabbed for his heart. The sleeping guest woke up with a backward jar that landed him on the floor as the upset chair flew out from under his falling weight.

Evelyn slid off her high chair and slipped to the swinging door, opened it enough to peep out and take in the situation, and gasped. She shot her head back, whistled to two busboys who were gathering props near by, and hurried them to the rescue of Gus, who was swimming in soup, digging pudding out of his eye, and trying to fight off knives and forks that came at him out of the air.

The two stolid youths came as quickly as their kind can navigate, pulled Gus up by the arm, and gathered up the pieces on trays.

Gus limped into the anteroom where the checker's shelf stood. Evelyn seized a napkin and wiped a dinner out of his ears and hair and swabbed his once white dickey, which was stained in streaks.

Presently she had him so that he could breathe

again and so that he could almost see. He felt himself sheepishly. No bones were broken—they were the only things he had carried that were not.

"Gus," sighed the checker, "I don' know what I'd do if I didn' have you to look after an' pull up on your feet when you do your ground an' lofties. I guess I know now what they mean by the maternal instinct in women."

"T'anks," said Gus. "Always you so nice by me I could cry."

"I guess it's becus you're such a blunderin' rummy," said Evelyn. "I never see anybody like you before. You can't walk ten steps without doin' a cartwheel, you can't talk ten words without gettin' in Dutch, an' you can't pick up a dish without slidin' for the home plate."

"I can't help it," said Gus, hanging his head.

"I know. That's just it. You can't help it. You're the mos' helpless gink I ever see, blunderbus. You gimme more worry than my complexion."

That night, as Evelyn, furred and self-assured, stood at the corner awaiting her car, and it was slippery underfoot and drizzly overhead, a drunken

rounder with excess baggage aboard stopped, looked over her trim person, tacked toward the curb, and laid his unsteady hand upon her shoulder. Evelyn shrank back a step, but his fingers closed on her.

"Hello, blondy," said the rowdy. "Got anything on?"

Evelyn, for once, lost her cocky composure. It was one thing to brave the world under the lights and under a friendly roof, where some one would see that law and order came out first and best. But on a dark corner, in a drizzling hour past midnight, gripped by a stranger full of bubbling boldness, her heart gave way for a moment. She tried to pull away, but he held fast.

The tears sprang to her eyes. She wanted to scream, but nothing came out.

Nothing came out except Gus the Bus, who came out of the door through which the help made exit. He saw the situation and started to run toward Evelyn. He had almost reached her when his foot slipped on the glassy walk and down he went. His momentum carried him like a cannon ball, flat on his back, feet in air.

Both his upraised feet caught the drunken ruffian squarely in the pit of his tender stomach. With a

howl he let go, staggered, and stumbled back and lit in a heap between the curb and the track where Evelyn's car pulled up at just that moment.

Evelyn threw her arm around Gus's neck and helped him quickly up. She kept it there a moment; then, seeing nobody looking, she pulled his head toward her and snatched him a kiss on the cheek.

"Bless your stumbling, fumbling, tumbling old feet," she said as she ran and made her car.

XI

GUS THE BUS DEFEATS THE GRIP GERM

EVELYN DONS RED CROSS;

BETTER, BUT TEMPERATURE STILL HIGH

DON'T it terrible cold?" said Gus the Bus as he entered for the supper trick, his fingers red and hurty and his nose blue, wet, and numb.

"Colder than Bryan's boom," said Evelyn the Exquisite Checker. "I think I'll go to Florida, where the water comes from."

"I wish if I could be by Mexico now, even if gives there shootings all the time," said Gus, blowing on his hands. "How cold it is here is a disgrace, don't you?"

"'S funny," said Gus an hour later. "When I am coming in I was freezing. Now I'm hot all over."

Evelyn felt his forehead and whistled.

"You beat it outta here and get to bed," she di-

rected. "And stop in the drug store and buy what I write on this here paper. The druggist'll tell you how to take it."

She wrote him an informal prescription, squared it with the head waiter, and started Gus for home. His head was hot and heavy and he sneezed lustily. With each racking sneeze the poor, torrid head rang and wrung. He got the things, got home, and got into bed.

In his room next morning the bus lay dreaming. He dreamt that he was a baron in Schleswig-Holstein, with a castle and servants and beer and everything, Evelyn was the baroness, all dressed in white like an angel, and——

She entered. She opened the door as quietly as the door could be opened, but the rusty hinges squeaked and made piteous outcry. She started toward the bed on tiptoes as quietly as possible, but the creaky boards squeaked and made lament. She reached her hand toward Gus's forehead as he awoke and turned his eyes to see his baroness, just her nose and eyes protruding from the chin-chin collar of her natty cloak.

"Oh," said Gus. "It's nice from you. I——"

"Shut up," said she, gently and sweetly. "You ain't supposed to get excited. Did you take all the medicine? Did you sleep all right? Does your head ache yet? Is your feet cold? Have you quit sneezing? How do you feel now?"

"No, ma'am," said Gus.

"Your forrid ain't so hot," she said, keeping her hand there till it slipped farther down and snuggled on his cheek. It was such a soft, white hand and it felt so good on the cheek. Gus beamed and grinned and all but cooed.

"You're better," said Evelyn decisively. "You'll be out in a few days."

"And you come every day here by me to see if am I better?" asked Gus.

"Behave," said the exquisite checker. "Whad de you want? A scandal or something?"

"No, a glass of water," said Gus.

She brought it, sat down on the edge of the bed, and fed it to him.

"Never before I knew water is sweet," said Gus.

"Hello," said Evelyn. "We got a poet in the fam'ly and we never got jerry before. Say—you're a reg'lar Romeo. Never knew water was sweet! Say, blunderbus, where'd you get that line o' bull?"

"I never did," said Gus, flushing. "I made it up out from my own head when you held me the glass."

"Your fever mus' be higher than what it feels like," said Evelyn, "if it makes you talk like that."

"Sure is high my fever," said Gus. "Feel once," and he held up his cheek again.

Gus remained at home for two days and each day Evelyn called. On the third day he returned to work and to his joy and surprise found in his pay envelope full compensation for the week despite the six meals' absence.

"Is a mistake?" he said to the cashier, showing her the contents of the little yellow holder.

"Nope. Evelyn fixed it with the boss," said the cashier.

Gus put the money in his pocket and after luncheon put on his thin coat and braved the cold. He went to the biggest store on the biggest street and found his way to the confectionery counter. Gus inquired after prices and looked over the stock. He found that whereas for 60 cents one could buy one of those little boxes of chocolates, for 50 cents one could get eight times as much of that yellow taffy. Gus did

not propose to be victimized all the time, so he bought the taffy.

"Take 't with you, 'r have 't sent?" asked the girl behind the counter.

"It could be sent," said Gus.

"Address," she spat at him.

"Efflyn," said Gus, and he gave the name and whereabouts of the café.

"Last name?" the clerk bit off.

"I donno," said Gus.

"Can't d'liv'r goods 'thout name," barked the clerk.

"I know," said Gus. "I know, but I forgot. Oh, I know—Efflyn Checker."

The girl wrote it on the slip in her book.

"'L be d'liv'rd 's aft'noon," she rattled past the pencil between her teeth.

"Wait a minute," said Gus. "I can put in the box a card?"

"S'pose you can," answered the girl. "Never heard of a card in taffy. But they ain' no rules against it."

She handed him a blank card.

Gus dug an inch of pencil out of his vest pocket,

took the card to the extreme end of the counter, pushed back his head, wiped his forehead with his cuff, wet the tip of the pencil-tip, corrugated his face in deep thought, rested on one foot, switched to the other foot, scratched his nose, wet his underlip, bit his upper lip, kicked his left heel with his right toe—and wrote:

"It should be so sweet by you this candy like was by me that water."

The dinner shift was over and off when Evelyn called Gus to her across the checking stand.

"C'm here," said she. "I wanna tell you something awful confydential."

Gus stood on his tippest toes and leaned far over toward her. Evelyn's hands were behind her back.

"Shut your eyes," said she. He did.

Her hands slipped forward and they were empty. They held his face. She drew it nearer, turned it slightly and place-hit a kiss on his cheek. He threw his eyes open in time to see the victorious retreat of his generous conqueror.

"So you thought that there water was sweet, huh?" said Evelyn.

"Sure," said Gus. "But wine is yet sweeter even."

Evelyn looked at him with a quizzical smile.

"The next time," said she earnestly, "I ketch you seein' one o' them mushy Bushman pichers I'm off o' you for life."

"I didn't see no Bushelman pichers," said Gus with feeling, "I read that in a German book."

XII

GUS AND EVELYN AT THE CABHOORAY

BALLADS AND BEER

FROM TENNESSEE TO UNREQUITED LOVE

"THOSE here cabhoorays," said Gus the Bus, "them is open all the night, don't it?"

"By a large majority," said Evelyn the Exquisite Checker as she threw her fur scarf around her neck, over the other shoulder.

"Leave you and me we should go and have once a look, huh?" said Gus.

Evelyn walked over, tilted up his chin, and looked searchingly into his eyes.

"What's matter, blunderbus?" said she. "Are you yearnin' for the night life or do you wanna drug my beer an' carry me to your cave? Or what?"

"No, ma'am," said Gus. "Only I am thinking maybe you like to see if tells the papers the true."

"Does the German papers write about 'em, too?"

"Sure!" said Gus. "The German papers is just

like the American ones, only they say it in German so people could understand it."

"You're hooked," said Evelyn. "Let's go."

They walked down the street until, from a basement, they heard a tinfoil voice screaming the soft beauties of Tennessee.

"That's one of them," said Evelyn. "Whenever you hear anything south o' Cincinnatta comin' out of a joint, that's a caboray."

So they descended to the cellar to see the low amusement.

Evelyn led the way to a far corner, but Gus pulled at the tail of her jacket.

"Here," said he, pleadingly, pointing to a table near the dance floor, 8 by 8, on a raised platform three inches from the floor.

"Nix," said Evelyn. "Lookin' at it is enough. I don't wanna touch it." So they compromised on a table midway.

There was a piano in one corner, and a hoppy sport with a handmade cigarette drooping from a corner of his mouth was striking chords, while a mechanical but vivacious young candidate for the girls' refuge was singing "Imagine me 'Way Down in

Tennessee Where Mother Waits for Me With a Banjo on Her Knee"—singing it from the hips to the lips. The portion below the hips was frozen; the portion above the lips was dead.

A waiter made them in a skip and a leap.

"What's your pleasure?" said he.

"Don't get personal," said Evelyn.

"Beer," said Gus.

"Two?" said the waiter.

"One," said Evelyn. "An' a sas'parilla to kill the dark brown taste o' the atmosphere."

The waiter slouched away and they turned again to the "entertainment."

"Ain't she funny?" said Gus. "Did you see something like her before?"

"Never," said Evelyn. "I don't hang around the Morals Court."

The song finished. A waiter and the other entertainer applauded. She sang the chorus over again. Only the entertainer applauded. She retired to the table with the other entertainer.

The piano player elided the last note of the song into the first note of a turkey-trot and stuck to the rhythm whether the notes played him true or false.

Three couples arose to dance.

Gus cleared his throat, pulled over on the edge of his chair, laid his heavy hand lightly upon Evelyn's arm.

"You like maybe——"

"What?" shrieked Evelyn. "Is that what you think o' me? Say, bus, did I ever in any way, shape, or manner give you to understand that I'm wrong in the head or that I'm a delinquent child or anything?"

"Excuse," said Gus.

"Behave, then," said Evelyn. And they turned and watched.

In the centre of the floor a teamster as big and svelte as a hippopotamus had his left arm around the neck of a fragile brunette, whose nose was pressed against the third button of his vest. His other arm was bent about her so that its hand rested on and covered most of her back, fingers spread.

"How can she see?" asked Gus.

"She can't," said Evelyn. "Love is blind."

"Look," said Gus. "She don' have to see. They don't go no place. Always they stay in the same spot."

"They'd leave it kinda sudden if I was chief o' police," said Evelyn.

"Look," said Gus, and he pointed to another pair gliding in and out of a triangle, bounded by four feet of wall on two sides, with an imaginary hypotenuse. "Look—he gives her a kiss."

"He ain't takin' no more chances than what she is," said Evelyn. "He's got the same judgment in choosin' the time an' place as what he has choosin' the girl."

"She likes," said Gus.

"That don' prove nothin'," said Evelyn, "excep' that nothin' can make her laugh—or cry. Poor kid. She looks like she works hard all day, an' this is the best she can get when she wants to play. When a party can't get no better she takes what she can get."

"Do you mean me?" asked Gus.

"No, you poor simp," said Evelyn. "I mean me, I suppose. I mean that poor kid what's dancin' over there, slippin' that big lumberjack a kiss so he'll buy her another schooner when they get back to the table. Some girls 'd rather have their beer than their health—or their—or their——"

"Or their what?"

"None o' your business," said Evelyn. "Look —the dance is through. That dip outta luck is gonna sing."

He arose, pulled down his vest, fingered his necktie, cleared his pipes and fired:

"*When you're in love with some one*
Who is not in love with you——"

Gus looked at Evelyn.

"Silly song," said she.

"It's the true," said Gus.

"He don' know nothin' about love," said Evelyn.

"No, but the fella what he writes that song he knew," said Gus. "It's a nice song, all right."

"Drink your beer," said Evelyn.

"No," said Gus. "Let's go from here away."

Gus laid a quarter on the table, helped Evelyn on with her fur, and escorted her up the stairs.

"*When you're in love with some one*
Who is not——"

The "repeat" chorus followed them as far as that when the door shut.

"It's nasty to-night, no?" said Gus, as he raised the umbrella and drew close to Evelyn to cover her with it.

"Never enjoyed fresh air so much in my life—ah, it's wonderful," said Evelyn the Exquisite Checker.

XIII

GUS THE BUS A BRAVE HERO IN HOLDUP

RESCUES EXQUISITE CHECKER!

ROUTS FOE, CAPTURES ARMAMENT

"WHAT for a kind business is this holduping all the time?" asked Gus the Bus.

"It's a good-paying trade," said Evelyn the Exquisite Checker. "It don' take much capital, experience ain't required, you don't have to give no references, and it's short hours."

"Don't the policers ketch them but?" asked Gus.

"Not unless they walks into a station and insists on gettin' justice or they forgets to leave the envelup at headquarters on the first o' the month," said Evelyn. "Once in a while a ignorant cop butts in where he ain't got no business, and he gets shot. Wouldn't you shoot a guy if he cut in on your work?"

"Oh, I never did," said Gus. "But I guess with hold-upers it's different. Them must be tough loafers, huh?"

"No, they're a lot o' nice, quiet boys what you could take home to your mother or your sister, I s'pose," said Evelyn, "but why talk about such as that when I've got a dark stretch three blocks long from my car to my house and it's after 1 A. M. in the mornin'?"

"I should go home with you?" asked Gus hopefully. "Maybe you need a man should protec' you, no?"

"If I needed a man—oh, well, come on. You can't do no harm, that's a cinch."

So Gus escorted her to the car, paid the fare gallantly, and stepped on both her feet in his anxiety to help her to the street at the far end.

"This way," pointed Evelyn, and they started briskly for her home.

They crunched along over the hard-packed snow two blocks.

"This way," said Evelyn, and they turned a corner to the left.

As they wheeled a black something stepped from

the shadow of a building squarely before them. They both jumped back instinctively. Evelyn started to seize Gus's arm, but she was too late—he had seized hers.

"Slip me," said a rough, loud voice, and they saw that the black object was a man and that his hat was pulled down over his eyes and that he had in his right hand a nickel-plated revolver.

Gus's hand on Evelyn's arm trembled and between his lips there came a half groan, half moan.

The man advanced and stuck the nozzle of the weapon under Gus's chin.

"Well—come t'rough," he commanded.

Gus's hand shook like a moving picture. He tried to get it into his pocket, but it slid on all sides of it. The man tapped his foot and waited patiently for half a minute. Then, with a snarl of impatience, he raised the gun over Gus's head and started to bring it down. Started is right. He had just started, when Evelyn's arm flew up and the robber felt a stinging blow on the cheek from the sharp corner of her vanity case.

The man staggered back. The walk was slippery and uneven. His heel struck a hard hillock of snow and went out backward. He fell down on one

knee. The hand that held the gun came to the sidewalk to support him. Evelyn jumped forward and stepped on the wrist, getting it in the arch between her French heel and her little sole.

The robber howled with pain.

"Get offa my duke," he screamed. "You're cuttin' my arm off."

"Oh, am I?" said Evelyn.

Then she turned, but held her foot steady. Gus was leaning against the building, panting and trying to shrink through the granite wall, which was not easy to do.

"Come here," called Evelyn sharply.

None too willingly Gus advanced.

"Reach down and take that $4 department store cannon out o' this roughneck's hand," she said.

"Oh, I couldn't do it," said Gus.

"Get that gun!" shouted Evelyn. "He can't do nothin'. I'm on his wrist, and if he makes a false move I'll slam him with this fool vanity case."

With many misgivings Gus walked around the squirming robber, planted his left foot behind his back, and reached timidly around with his right and kicked at the hand. With a howl the robber released his fingers and the revolver fell half a foot

away on the snow. Gus kicked it mildly, then picked it up.

"Hand it to me," said Evelyn. Gus gave it to her, muzzle front, with a stuttering hand.

Evelyn closed her little fist around the butt and slid her index finger on the trigger. She pointed it at the highwayman's head. Then she removed her foot.

"Get up," she said. The big boob arose, climbing up on his hands and knees. He rubbed his right wrist tenderly with his left hand.

"Gee," said he. "I'll be lame in that there mitt for a week."

Evelyn kept the revolver at his head.

"Now pay a little attention to this," said she. "I don't wanna have to go to no court and through no rigamarole to send you where you belong. But —gee, I wish I was a man. I'd knock your head off just for luck, you big, cowardly slob. So you're holding up women and boys, eh?" and she swung her metal case and cut a gash under his eye. He recoiled, and she followed. "So—you're a robber, are you?" and again she let fly the little case, and this time it struck him across the lips. "So you're a

tough baby and you pull rough stuff, eh?" and she swatted him over the sore eye and drew blood.

The thug tried to cover his face with his arms, but the rain of blows found openings. His cheeks bled from a dozen cuts. His good eye looked into the tunnel of his own revolver, and well he knew that slight pressure of her finger would end his days.

"Now," said Evelyn, when she had exhausted her good left arm, "you can vamp. Go on—and keep on going, and if you turn around or stop I'll shoot."

The man picked up his hat, wheeled heavily out of the path of the revolver and ran, nor did he hesitate until he had been lost in the far night and the echo of his flying steps on the responsive snow had passed.

Evelyn dropped the revolver from her limp fingers. Gus stepped to her side. She was trembling and the tears shot into her eyes.

"Oh, Gus," she sobbed. "Take me home. I'm so frightened and nervous."

"Sure!" said Gus, putting his arm about her. "Don't you be afraid. I take you home all right."

Gus picked up the revolver, and, holding it in

sight in one hand, and with the other pressed about her waist, he half pushed, half pulled her to the door.

"Thanks," said she. "You're so brave—I donno what I'd 'a' done if it wasn't for you."

"Oh, that's all right," said Gus. "Good-night. I got here the gun and it's better for that holduper I shouldn' meet him again—that's all."

XIV

GUS THE BUS SAVINGS BANK FOUNDED

EVELYN IS PRESIDENT

DEPOSITS ACCEPTED; LOANS EXTENDED

"SAY," said Gus the Bus, "could you lend me, maybe, for 5 cents I shouldt have it carfare?"

"Sure," said the checker. "Here's a dime—you might wanna take a woman out or something."

Gus thanked her, looked the dime over, and took it.

"How comes it," asked Evelyn, "that you're as clean as this here—strapped for a jit for transportation on a snowy night like this here?"

"The checkroom boy he learns me how to match it nickels," said Gus.

"Oh, he does, did he? What'd he nick you for?"

"He don't nick me," said Gus. "But he wins from me all my moneys what I got it and now I

don't got it yet. Eighty-five cents he wins from me away."

"You go out and tell that safe-blower I wanna tell him a funny story—go on. Send him in here to me."

Gus returned with the checkroom conductor, a swarthy youth, crimpy of hair, uniformed like a cabin boy, and smelling of all the hair tonics and toilet waters that the shelf alluringly held forth to the customer.

"C'm here," said Evelyn. "Where'd you get that stuff to take Gus, here, for eighty-five cen's wit' that there old army game, huh?"

"Listen, lady," said the checkroom boy. "I win it from him honest. Believe me, I wouldn't take from him a cent what it wasn't to me coming. He matches me and he don't match me and I win. Y'see——"

"Cut it," said Evelyn. "Even if you played him on the level, and I never heard of a guy in your line o' graft what could, it don't go. Now you kick t'rough with eighty-five cen's. The high guy he don' stand for no gamblin' on these here pree-misses. Slip him—eighty-five—c'mon——"

The checkroom boy gulped.

"I told you, lady," he began, "it ain't my fault he makes always with a head when it comes by me with a tail. I win from him honest and I won't give him back. I wouldn't do it. No, I wouldn't."

Evelyn walked around the checking shelf. She reached forward rather suddenly and got her fingers inside the collar of the alien witness.

"You—come across—wit'—eighty-five—or—" and she shook him with every speech—"I'll rattle you—till—your ribs get loose—you sneakthief. Come on now, before I—stand you—on your—head, an' shake it outta your crooked pockets."

The checkroom boy tore at her fingers, but she was stronger. He was half off the floor half the time. His left hand sought his left pocket, but he was being shaken so that he had difficulty in finding it. Finally he got it in and brought it out filled with silver and nickels. Evelyn stopped shaking him, but did not let go. The checkroom boy counted out 85 cents and threw it on the floor. Gus scrambled for the coins and picked them up.

The checkroom boy glowered at him and at Evelyn, who still held his collar.

"Now take this here f'm me," said Evelyn, "you penny-ante panhandler. You can operate your

gold brick game wit' your whiskbroom and your bum Florida water and your squirty soap all you like. But that goes for the suckers an' for Sweeney. Gus here is on the inside, see? He's a member o' this here official fam'ly, he is. An' don't you start workin' the gyp on him. Ain't you got no pride in your own place? Ain't nobody or nothin' sacred to youse secon'-story checkroom guys, or ain't there?"

"Lady, believe me——"

"That's out," interrupted Evelyn, releasing his collar. "Now you go on back and peddle your towels and you lay off o' the help. Maybe you didn't trim 'im—maybe you did. Anyway, you're too smart and too lucky to be playin' for money wit' a flathead like this here Gus, what he ain't got very good sense. Beat it."

"Oh, thanks," said Gus. "Always you take me my part. Always you are my best friend."

"You need a gardeen," said Evelyn. "You oughtn'a be trusted wit' large sums like 85 cen's. You can't stand prosperity. The gamblin' blood in you begins to rage or you go out and buy phoney diamon's or you go crazy and buy me carnations

like you did the other night. Say—ain't you never gonna grow up?"

"Sure—some times," said Gus.

"Well, there ain't no better time than now. Now I tell you what. After this you gimme your dough. I want you to gimme every dime excep' what you need for carfare on bad days and your room rent. I'll be your banker. I'll save your dough and you don't get a jit without you tell me what it's for and I O. K. it. And don't you hold out on me, or I'll frisk you every night and take it away f'm you."

"Yes, ma'am," said Gus.

"Now gimme 75 outta that there 85 cents. We'll start the forchun wit' that. You oughta pick up a quarter in the dinin' room to-night by hook or crook. That oughta make it a dollar before the night's over, and on a buck I can start a bank account."

Gus obediently handed over 75 cents.

"That leaves you a dime—carfare out and back," said Evelyn. "You can take the car to-night and to-morrow mornin'—it's pretty sloppy. Now, on your way."

Gus grinned and bowed himself out.

Evelyn put the 75 cents in her purse and smiled.

"It's a shame the way that there rum gets tooken all the time," she mused.

Gus shuffled about the dining room and in the course of the meal managed to glean a solitary silver dime. This he deposited with Evelyn, making his credit 85 cents in all.

"Now, go on home," said Evelyn. "And don't start buyin' flat buildin's or mon'ments wit' your carfare, 'cause you don't get a copper after this only by special permission o' President Evelyn o' the Gus the Bus Savin's Bank, not incorporated. See?"

A few minutes later Evelyn, with her fur collar covering her chin, strode neatly toward the corner to await her car. She saw Gus emerge from the drug store, puffing on a freshly lighted cigar and crumpling a stick of gum between his teeth at the same time.

"Cigar—that's a nickel," she said to herself. "Gum—that's another nickel. The simp palmed a dime on me, surest thing I know."

She strode out and stepped beside Gus.

"Where'd you get dough for them luxuries?" she demanded.

She drew him behind a pillar in a doorway.

"Out of you," said Gus blandly. "Don't you remember you lended me a dime?"

Evelyn gasped.

"Well, of all the—why, say—you're worse than Jesse James. You never says a word about it, neither. Borrowin' from the bank before it's open for business an'——"

"I thought you didn't want him back the dime to-night," said Gus.

"Oh, you did?" said Evelyn. "Well, this here bank is run on stric'ly business principles. You take the President home an' pay her carfare. Then you walk home in the snow an' you walk down to-morrow mornin'. That's to teach you a lesson not to monkey with 'high finance.'"

"Oh, thanks," said Gus. "I like take you by your home."

"What's the use?" sighed Evelyn. "That boy won't never have no business head. Come on, blunderbus—there comes my rattler."

XV

GUS GETS A GIFT AND TAKES ANOTHER ON HIS BIRTHDAY

THE BUS AND EVELYN CELEBRATE EVENT

"YOU know what is to-day by me?" asked Gus the Bus, beaming like a pleased horse.

"May my nose get shiny if I do," said Evelyn the Exquisite Checker. "What is by you, blunderbus, that your freckled features is decorated with such a gaudy smile?"

"It's to-day my gebirthday," said Gus, executing a mild pigeonwing. After he had picked himself up and dusted his knees, he added: "I'm 20 years of old now."

"Well, well," said the exquisite one. "I thought you was about 12, figurin' from your conduc'."

"Oh, no," simpered the bus. "I am 12 lots years ago. Pretty soon I'm old enough I should take out papers, then I'm a Americaner and I could vote against taxes."

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"It'd take a whole lot o' papers to make an American outta you, Gus," said Evelyn. "But this here birthday mustn't be let go by. We'll have to celebrate it some way."

"Excuse," said Gus. "Is Shorty calling me and when he calls me and I don't right away come he swears on me it's something terrible."

And he hurried from the checker's shelf into the dining room.

All through the service hours Gus bore the beatific grin of a man unto whom something has come. He jauntily balanced trays upon his uplifted palm, dropping only a few of them, and once he even whistled until Shorty took him by the back of the neck outside the vision of the diners and said: "Hey—what do you think this joint is? A joint?"

Whereupon Gus stopped whistling and let out his exuberance by serving salted crackers with biscuit Tortoni and oyster forks with beer. Nothing could spoil his merry humour. Birthdays came but once a year to Gus, who was only a poor boy and couldn't afford many birthdays. And when one came it was not to be clouded by anything.

So, when the period was over, and Gus had taken

off his alpaca monkey jacket and put on his shiny coat and his threadbare ulster, and Evelyn took her pencil out of her rosy mouth and called to him, he came a-skipping.

"Gus," said she, "if you'll wait a minute till I play a little fox-trot on this here adding machine, file away the checks, and go through these here tickets to see if any of the waiters added in the telephone number and the date by mistake, I'll go down the street with you and wish you a few happy returns. Stick?"

"Me?" said Gus. "Bet you my life I stick."

Ten minutes later the plump little checker had buttoned her chin-chin up to her ears, slipped the gloves on her creamy little hands, and beckoned Gus to join her. They went through the employes' door and out into the street.

Evelyn took Gus's arm and led him to the drug store on the corner, an owl rendezvous which kept open nights to sell lip-rouge to chorus girls and cigarettes to their friends.

Evelyn braced to the cigar counter, looked critically into the case and said:

"What are them a box o' fifty?"

"Two and a quarter," said the clerk.

"Any good?"

"Clear Havana."

"Wait a minute," said Evelyn. "I sell more clear Havanas every day than ever come through this door. Now don't bull me. I asked you is these here smokes any good, not where do they come from."

"I smoke them myself," said the clerk.

"Lemme see something else," said Evelyn.

She agreed, after some further exchange of diplomatic correspondence, on fifty for $3, with bands on and a picture of Von Hindenburg on the box cover.

"Here, Gus," said she. "Now, don't try and smoke all these in one night, because it won't improve your beauty, and it can't be done, anyhow."

"Are—are they for me?" gasped Gus.

"Sure," said Evelyn. "Who'd you think they was for? Me?"

"Oh, no," said the bus. "But it's too much money. Three thalers for me cigars. Oh, it's too much."

"Don't give me no argument," said Evelyn. "Take these here ropes, and I wish I could give you more. And smoke 'em one at a time. Merry birthday wishes, besides."

Gus took the wrapped box under his arm and Evelyn's arm under the other arm and they stood on the corner waiting for her car to round and stop.

It came. Gus helped Evelyn up, she turned to thank him and bid him good-night, but he was on the step and was handing the conductor a dime.

"Hey," said Evelyn. "You don't go this way."

"Yes, I do," said Gus. "On my gebirthday I go this way," and he gently shoved her along into the car and sat down beside her.

"I take you by your home," he said. "'Tsall-right, no?"

"It'll have to be, I guess. Say—you're gettin' to be a reg'lar cave-guy, takin' these here trips for granted, without askin' my leave or nothin'. Suppose I got another party waitin' for me at the other end o' the line to walk home with me, huh?"

"Oh, no," said Gus.

"Don't be so sure," said Evelyn. "You know you ain't the only man in my life."

"Not yet, maybe," said Gus.

"Listen at him," she ejaculated. "Well, I'll let you get away with it this time because it's your birthday. But you mustn't begin horning in too

strong on my social hours o' leisure, because sometime you might run into somebody and I don't wanna see you light on your ear, get me?"

"Oh, no," said Gus, leaving her to imagine what he meant.

There was no one to meet Evelyn at the other end. Gus helped her to the walk and escorted her to the door. Evelyn reached down into her labyrinthian handbag after her keys, fumbled about with her gloved fingers, found them, started to raise her head, couldn't. She felt Gus's arm about her neck, squirmed half way about and raised her face just as Gus's face came down, and she was distinctly and honestly kissed just where kisses were meant to be kissed.

She disengaged herself, stepped back, looked Gus over, up and down. He stood, trying to look unconcerned, but blushing furiously and shaking just a bit.

"It's a mighty good thing for you," she said emphatically, "that it's your birthday."

"I should say so," said Gus, hugging his box of cigars and licking his lips. "I should say so. Goodnight—thanks you."

XVI

GUS THE BUS AMONG THE MIDNIGHT SET MEETS A CHORUS GIRL

LION OF ROMANCE EPISODE IN GAY PARTY

"I GOT to sticking to-nights," said Gus the Bus. "'Is a swellish party in a private dinings room what gives a millionaire."

"Don't I know it?" answered Evelyn the Exquisite Checker. "I got to stay, too, to check in the foolish food and the bubble booze what goes through."

"Ooh," said Gus. "Maybe then I take you home when it's late in the night, huh?"

"Maybe," said Evelyn.

The party was on. A piano player, a saxophone blower, and a violin scratcher had arrived, the table was being set in the big private room, and the guests were arriving.

The host, a manufacturer of sealing wax, was issuing orders right and left, right and wrong. It was

to be a party of twelve, with six locally successful business men and six chorus girls from a local success.

Gus shambled and shuffled to and fro, stepping with impartial fervour upon the sure feet of the men and the dainty piggies of the footlight fairies. Every time he had occasion to pass Evelyn's throne on his way to or from the kitchen and service bar, he stopped to give report of what was going.

"Is one girl," said the bus. "She got it a dress on what it's hardly any on her shoulders. And she's got it in the face paint is something terrible. Is her name Fiffian—I hear a man he calls her like that. He says, 'Have another glass wine, Fiffian,' and she to him says it, 'All right, old dear—here's looking at your bald bean.' It's something terrible."

"See that you don't lose your heart with all them dizzy beauts buzzin' around," warned Evelyn.

"If you should see it how dance them mens and them girls," said Gus. "It's something terrible. One fat man he hugs a girl like he's gonna bust her in the half and she looks up and she says to him, 'Say—is this here a dance or is this here a rassling match?' And he says, 'Oh, you little cutie.' And he laughs and again they dance more yet.

"The man what he gives it the party he runs around and everybody he asks will they have some more tschampagne. One girl I sees she spills in the spitooner a glass wine it costs a thaler if it costs a a niggel. A other one is smoking a cigarette. Chust like a man she is smoking. Yes, ma'am—from the nose she blows it and she don't cough or cry or nothing. It's something terrible."

"You shut your eyes when you go back there," said the exquisite one. "Them sights is for strong men, not for boys, fawraners and busses. The amusements o' the idle rich and the busy Lizzies o' the front row is ruanous to kids and yaps. Tie a napkin around your peeps. You wouldn' stumble much more than you do nach'ly, anyway."

Gus reëntered the private room. On his right hand, upheld parallel with the ceiling, rested a round tray that held a round dozen hollow-stemmed goblets. In his left hand he carried an ice bucket in which reposed a magnum of vintage with its head and neck protected by a shawl of white napkin like a madonna.

The piano, saxophone, and violin were tearing away, and in the centre of the floor four couples

were swaying and writhing to the melody of an insinuating, insidious fox-trot.

Like a Ford wheezing into a party of pleasure seekers on a crossroads, Gus, his eyes upward to keep the balance of the dainty glasses, strode. Two trotting pairs hit him at once, a foot got tangled with his, and down he went. The glasses spilled, the tray banged to the floor, the bucket caromed off a lady's hip against a gentleman's shirt-front and semi-circled under the table at the other end, spilling its salted ice in an opalescent shower over stiff shirts, bare shoulders, and party clothes.

Gus landed at the bottom of the heap. The band stopped abruptly. Men and women disentangled themselves. Shorty put his foot against Gus's back, braced himself, reached two fingers under the celluloid collar of his lieutenant, and yanked him to his feet. Gus rubbed his head in bewildered semi-consciousness.

"Of all the lobs, boneheads, rummies, numbskulls, fumble-footed, feeble-minded flatheads," exploded Shorty, "you're the champ."

"It tripped me somebody," said Gus.

"You was that somebody," howled Shorty. "You gotta take one foot outta the way before you

can put down the nex' one, doncha know that? Pick up them smashed glasses and sweep up that ice before I——"

One of the chorus girls arose from a chair beside the wall and crossed quickly between them.

"Here," she said to Shorty, "you quit abusing that child. He couldn't help it. Now you're getting paid for waiting on this party. Wait on it. Let that boy be. He's doing his best."

Shorty shot Gus a look of black resentment and went about his affairs. The girl bent down and began to pick up bits of broken glass. The host walked over.

"My dear Vivian," said he, "don't bend like that and get your fingers all cut trying to undo the mistakes of this clumsy jackass. Come, dearie—get up. Have another glass of wine."

The girl arose from her knees, flushed.

"Lemme alone," she said hotly. "I'm going to help this boy pick up this mess. Maybe he is a clumsy jackass. Maybe he ain't. You don't know. You never carried a big tray of glasses and dishes. You never did, did you?"

"Why—of course not," said the host.

"Well," said the girl, "I did."

"Why, Vivian—quite absurd——"

"It isn't absurd. I used to do that in a boarding-house and I was mighty glad to get the chance. I didn't drink wine those days. I was in luck to get water. I know what this poor boy feels like. I've felt it. And I'm going to help him clear up if it puts the whole party on the blink; now what do you think of that?"

"Of course—if you enjoy it—if you want to do it—of course you're my guest and I want to see you have a good time——"

"This is the most fun I've had at this party," said the girl, returning to her knees and scraping up glass with a menu card.

Gus, on his knees, was toiling beside her.

"There," said she. "I guess that cleans up the job," and she rubbed her hands together, walked over, spilled some champagne on her hands to wash them and wiped them with a napkin.

"Oh, thanks," said Gus.

"That's all right," said the girl. "I guess I'll get back in the party."

"Well," said Evelyn, when Gus was bidding her good-night at her door. "Now that you've seen

chorus girls at play, and you know what a lot o' made-up hussies wit' hearts cut outta ice and beauty made outta paint such as them is, maybe you'll appreciate a reg'lar girl like—well, like me, for instance, huh, Bus?"

"I think you're grand," said Gus. "But chorusers ain't all alike. Some of them is got it a heart."

"Hello," said Evelyn. "Are you fallin' for one o' them bum dolls?"

"If I fall," said Gus dreamily, "maybe one of them she picks me up."

XVII

GUS THE BUS MAKES A RUN ON THE BANK

PRESIDENT EVELYN YIELDS

AGAIN A PAUPER AND IN DEBT

"HOW much got it I in our bank?" said Gus the Bus.

"What you want to know for?" asked Evelyn the Exquisite Checker, president, directorate, and receiving and paying teller of the Gus the Bus Trust and Savings Bank, not inc.

"Becus," said the bus, "I want draw it out all."

"What?" gasped Evelyn. "After I've kep' at you all these weeks an' took it away from you a dime at a time so you'd have a few beans in the sock against sickness or a accident or hard times or a financial panic or a vacation or any other great disaster—now you wanna turn the bank inside up and upside out? Well, believe me, Bus, you'll give a mighty good reason to the president of this here ins'itution

before you get a jit, not to even think of makin' a clean-up."

Just then Gus saw Shorty taking an order and he skated off to do his share toward making the job as messy as possible.

"Well, of all the unmillicated gall," mused Evelyn. "That Dutch youth is got some wild idea under that rusty hair. And it's up to me to stop him. I wonder what he wants with all that money—is he gonna elope with a dishwasher or is he gonna buy a Ford?"

And she reached into the drawer and drew out the little book in which the accounts of the bank were scrupulously recorded—deposits and withdrawals, each dated and a balance struck after each item. She looked at the last sum—$39.70. That was what he had saved since she took forcible protectorate over his fiscal affairs. It was a goodly nest-egg for a busboy. She knew many silk-lined rounders who didn't have as much.

And she did not propose to let the scatter-brained lad wipe out that consummation which she had developed by constant, daily nagging and all but searching his pockets.

When Gus came by again she looked at him a bit irritated. She was disappointed. Her best efforts, her unselfish battle with him to teach him thrift and force him to lay by an occasional dollar against his ingenuous inclinations and gullible propensities, had born but transitory fruit. She was hurt. Gus saw her attitude and avoided her eyes all through the meal period. When the clatter and the chatter had ended and Evelyn was totalling her checks he came to her shelf.

"Well?" said she. "I suppose you come to give an account o' yourself. And I got one comin', too, after your rash run on this bank. Shoot."

Gus reached into an inside pocket and drew forth a paper, folded into an oblong. He opened it out flat on the checking shelf.

"This is a letter," said he.

Evelyn took it from him and glanced at it querulously.

"I can't read Egyptian," said she, handing it back.

"Oh, no," said Gus. "This is Cherman. You can't read it. But I read it to you and I make translation. Listen."

"Says here, 'My dear son Gustav: I got your

letter and I was glad to hear that you are well and getting along in that wonderful America. Here is not so good. You are lucky you are by a land where gives no war. And I am hoping, my boy, and praying that never you will know what means it a war.

"'Your brother Friedrich's body was saved by Ypres and we buried him here in the Lutheran churchyard where I knew he would want to rest. He died like a good, true son from his fatherland, fighting.

"'Your father is by Verdun and I got from him one letter only this month, and he says they are fighting hard but the Lord be praised the kaiser's soldiers fight good for the glory of our country, and is victory after victory for our holy flag.

"'Your brother Ludwig he is yet in Belgium and he writes every twice weeks. He does there police duty on a roads, and thank the Great Father is not there much fighting now. He had enough when he first got there and he nearly died from the wounds before they let him again get up from the hospital.

"'I am here alone now with your little brother Carl who is growing fine and strong and by next year maybe will be big enough so they will take him

for a soldier. My! Won't little Carlie look it grand with a uniform. I'll cry when he marches away, Gustav. He will be the last. But I will be proud from him. And I know you will, too. We Chermans we must give first to our kaiser and our country, no matter if breaks our hearts.

"'Your sister Anna is in Hamburg, where she nurses in the central military hospital. Your Aunt Ida is there with her, too, and writes me that Anna is a fine nurser and a true daughter from Chermany. We should all be proud from her. I thank the good Lord every night in my prayers that he gave to me—a poor woman like me who never did nothing to deserve such grand blessings—such a fine soldier for a husband and such fine children to be useful to their country in a time like this.

"'Only you, my Gustav, are not here to give a hand in these terrible hours from need and blood.

"'But that is not your fault, my dear son. You went to the big, strange land to find a fortune and maybe when this big slaughter is over and you will be rich you can do your part and help us all, for we will be crippled in mind and body and our farm is a patch from weeds and we will all have to live.

"'It is hard for me now. Money is awful scarce

now. Sometimes Carl and I we haven't something to eat. But Carl never complains. He is young and strong. And I am a mother. And a mother should never complain, too. With all that I have much to be thankful for. So far the war has spared me your father and three of your brothers and your sister. And if they should all give their lives for God and the kaiser I would still have you, Gustav.

"'Good-by, my dear son. Write us often and think of us and remember that I am for you every night praying. And be careful and don't catch cold there in that country so far away where I can't watch over you.

"'Your loving MAMA.'"

Evelyn dropped two tears upon the checking shelf.

She walked to the safe, spun the combination and took out an envelope and handed it to Gus.

"There's $39.70 in there, Bus," she said. Then she swept her hand down where Gus couldn't (and, let us hope, wouldn't) look, and came up with some bills. She took off two twos and three ones.

"Here," she said. "Send that along, too."

"Oh, no," said Gus. "Mine it's be enough—it

makes pretty near a hundred sixty marks. In Chermany is that lots of money."

"Don't talk back to the president o' this bank," said Evelyn. "Your account now stands owin' this institution seven bucks wit'out interest an' no hurry for payment."

XVIII

GUS THE BUS AS A LIMB OF THE LAW

SOLEMNLY SWORN

WISES JURY WHAT IS WHAT ON SUNDAY

"WHAT is this for a kind paper?" asked Gus the Bus, handing up to Evelyn the Exquisite Checker a stiff sheet folded once, lengthwise.

"Why, blunderbus," exclaimed the fairest one. "This here is a suppeeney."

"I don't know what is that," said Gus. "Comes by me a fat feller and he gives me and he says me 'better you be there, that'sall—better you be there, git me?'"

"Why, you have to be there," said Evelyn. "This is for to-morrow morning. The boss is been pinched for selling drinks on Sundays. They're gonna ask you what you know about it."

"I know about it plenty," said Gus, swelling his little chest at the realization that he was to be a witness in a court.

"Oh, do you?" said Evelyn, and as Gus looked up he saw the white lid descend slowly down over her left orb, and then slowly rise again. "Do you?"

"Notting I know about it," said Gus the Bus. "How should I know?"

Gus was called from the witness-room into the assembled court an hour after the session had begun. A bailiff led him to the stand.

"Raise your right hand and be sworn," ordered the clerk. So Gus raised his left hand and looked hopeful. Eventually it was fixed and he had promised to tell the truth, the whole truth, etc.

The prosecutor was a fussy, important party, much given to bullying witnesses and claiming technical advantages. He arose from his seat and strode belligerently at Gus, who was looking about the room. He saw Evelyn, creamy and peachy, sitting in a spectator's chair. The boss sat near her. Evelyn winked hard—almost loud. Gus beamed a grin back to her to indicate that he understood, that his mind was working and that his heart was right.

"What is your name?" yelled the prosecutor.

"Gus," said Gus.

"Your name—your full name—your whole name."

"Oh—Gustave Siegfried Schimmelhaus."

"Where do you reside?"

"I never did—no, sir," said Gus, with vehemence.

"Reside," repeated the prosecutor. "Live. Where do you live?"

"Oh—in Schleswig-Holstein."

"No, no. Here. Where do you live here?"

"I don't," said Gus. "I board."

Evelyn looked at the boss. The boss looked at Evelyn. It looked safe and all right.

"What is your occupation?"

"Twenty, three weeks ago," said Gus.

"No—not your waist measure," screamed the city lawyer. "And not your badge number, either. What do you do?"

"Oh," said Gus. "Sometimes I take a walk, sometimes I go by a nickel show, sometimes maybe I chust go home and go to bed."

"No," yelled the prosecutor. "What do you do for a living?"

"Oh—I work."

"Yes. You work. What kind of work do you do?"

"Very fine work. There is sitting the boss. Ask him. He says I am doing my work nice, and Efflyn there——"

"I don't care about your recommendations," bellowed the lawyer. "What I want to know is what position you occupy."

"Position?" said Gus. "Mostly I am standing. Sometimes I sit down. When I sleep, though——"

"Your honour," cried the attorney. "This witness is impudent."

"He is answering your questions, I believe, to the best of his ability. Proceed," said the court, choking.

"Is there such a thing in a restaurant as a busboy?" asked the lawyer, seeking a new tack to get in from behind.

"Sure," said Gus. "Nick, he is a busboy, so is Pete. We got lots busboys in our place."

"Are you one of them?"

"I'm."

"Fine," said the questioner. "I didn't think we'd ever get that far. Now—what are the duties of a busboy?"

"Oh," said Gus. "He must keep clean his shoes, he must be early for lunch and dinner and supper and he must collect on Saturday the wages, three thalers, if he didn't break much plates in the week so that he ain't got it coming so much. Sometimes by me is good, and others weeks is——"

The lawyer did a war dance. He looked at the court and got no suggestions there. He raised his hand.

"Do you serve drinks?" he shot.

"Yes, ma'am," said Gus.

"Ah," said the official. "What drinks do you serve?"

"Soup, ketchups, water, cream, and finger-bowls."

The court had to laugh, and did.

The pompous interlocutor was nettled. He stepped closer. He pushed his finger almost in Gus's pale eye.

"You are evading my questions," he howled. "I don't think you're such an idiot as you make yourself out to be."

"Oh, no, sir," said Gus. "I'm smart. Ask anybody."

"Very well, then. What I want to know—and you know it as well as I do—is do you serve intoxicating drinks?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Gus. "Vinegar."

The lawyer clinched his hands.

"Do you ever serve beer?" he cried. "Do you ever serve a customer with whisky, gin, cocktails,

champagne, ale, highballs, claret, sauterne, Burgundy, Pilsener?"

"Oh, no," said Gus. "If I serve a customer all that he would die."

Everybody laughed—even the jury.

The lawyer bit his teeth. He turned completely around, came back and began again, looking a trifle whipped.

"Do you serve any of these things to any customers?" he asked, slowly, primer fashion, cutting the sentence into syllables like a mother cutting a bit of family steak for the baby.

"No, sir," said Gus. "Only waiters serves. I'm only a poor busboy, mister, and they don't let me serve no good drinks—only water. Oh, mister, if you knew only what is it to be a poor busboy like me, maybe——"

The lawyer cut him off impatiently.

"This witness is hopeless," he cried to the court. "I can do nothing with him."

"Excused," said the court.

And Gus came down.

The boss was found not guilty.

They always are. If it were half as hard to get

an intoxicating drink as it is to prove one, Sunday would indeed be a bitter period, living up to the lines of that deathless poet who sang: "Sundays must be dark and dreary."

When the crew all assembled at the café for the luncheon routine Evelyn patted Gus on the shoulder.

"You're some witness, kid," said she. "And the boss slips me a little news for you. Your pay goes up half a caser a week. And, by the way—kick in with that $1.10 witness fees, because the Gus the Bus Savings and Trust Company is still shootin' at the same old stand."

XIX

GUS THE BUS WOUNDED BUT VERY HAPPY

POOR LAD DOESN'T SEE

EVELYN MEETS ONE WHO FEAZES HER

GUS THE BUS, his head down to shield from the rain, was cutting a corner toward the alley where the help's entrance to the café lay. He was abreast of the front door of the restaurant when, out of nowhere, without a honk or a sneeze of warning, the pugnacious nose of a low speed aboutshot out of the car track, skidded drunkenly, and struck Gus just below where his little alpaca work-jacket would end in the back. The busboy's hands flew over his head and he dived through the air, across the sidewalk, headfirst down the steps, in through the guests' revolving door.

As his skull struck the first step the click of marble against marble swung the doorman around and by the time Gus hit bottom the uniformed carriage

caller was at his side, asking him whether he was hurt and other foolish questions.

Gus sat up, rubbed his head, and whined. A policeman came running. The driver of the car, who had pulled up hastily, followed.

The policeman seized the young autoist, who wore a mackintosh and gauntlets of rich make-up, by the arm. The driver gave him a card. The policeman looked at it, then looked at the young man, then touched his cap and said he hoped the bus wasn't hurt bad. The card read "Mortimer J. Stephens," and it identified its owner as one of the richest youths in the city.

"I'll take him to a hospital," said Mr. Stephens.

The policeman and the doorman lifted Gus, whose head was rattling and whose eyes were dull, and carried him to the smart little car. Stephens flew in beside him, started off, and raced to a private hospital not far away. Two attendants came out and helped Gus to the elevator.

"Do everything necessary," said Stephens. "I'll be back later."

They took Gus into a room. Oh, what a room! It had a big, high, snowy bed with billowy pillows. The furniture was white and soft and sanitary. A

porcelain room beyond, with bath, shower, and mysterious cranks and appendages, winked whitely.

The internes raised him and undressed him. They put a clean-smelling and crinkly robe on him and slipped him into the bed. A nurse entered. She was all business, but fine business.

Then came a doctor, who washed his hands a thousand times, took Gus's temperature, asked him what his grandfather had died of, felt the natural and acquired bumps on his knob, and said it was serious. There was a scalp wound. The hair was shaved around it and it was disinfected, plastered, and bandaged.

The nurse brought dinner. Ooh—delicious. She fed him and stroked back his wiry hair. Ooh—more delicious. Everything was quiet and soothing. The pain in the head was getting less.

And then, joy of it all, in came Evelyn the Exquisite Checker.

She asked the nurse a question or two in an undertone and beamed at the news that it wasn't dangerous. She came to Gus's bedside and put a big bunch of roses in a vase. Then she took his hand and asked him how he felt.

He couldn't tell her. He could only say "great."

They talked and she sympathized and stroked his hand. She said he would be out in a day or two. He thought he'd like to stay forever.

The door opened and in came young Stephens.

He asked Gus about himself, met Evelyn, smiled on her genially, and told her how sorry he was that the accident had happened.

"He's convalescing," said Stephens.

"Oh, I'll get over that," said Gus.

Stephens smiled.

"You'll be all right," said he to Gus over Evelyn's shoulder. "I'm very sorry that I hurt you. But I am doing what I can to repair it. Here—this is for you," and he laid a bill in Gus's hand.

The bus lifted it and looked at it twice before he believed it. He held it to Evelyn's view.

"A century!" gasped the checker.

"Ooh, mister!" choked Gus.

"Oh, that's not too much—you're quite welcome," said Stephens.

Gus looked about the pretty room. He looked at the chubby little nurse. He looked at the flowers. He looked at the hundred-dollar bill. He looked at Evelyn, and he looked at her hand, which was holding his. He looked at the perfecto that was in

his other hand, which the doctor had said he could have.

"Oh, mister," said Gus. "Any time you feel like you should hit somebody wit' your outomobile you let me know."

"No," said Stephens, "I don't like to hit anybody. But I couldn't help it this time. The car track was slippery and it skidded me. That little racer goes crazy on wet asphalt."

"Don't you be sorry," said Gus. "It was by me a great pleasure. To be hitten by a fine gent like you is any time a pleasure. And now you so grand to me—I wouldn't never forget you, mister."

Stephens smiled to Evelyn, who looked at his fine features, his easy air, his kindly eyes, his 18-carat manners, and smiled back—he smiled broadly, she smiled a bit wistfully.

I tell you how she smiled, because we will hear more of this meeting. It was a great hour for Evelyn, a new fancy for Stephens, and a black promise for Gus that he did not see in his pitiful happiness.

"Good day, and good luck," said the young millionaire, taking Gus's hand from Evelyn.

"By you should be a good day and good luck," said Gus.

"I am happy to have met you," said Stephens, slipping his hand over Evelyn's, which had fallen limply on the cover.

She started to her feet. The blood came to her rose-petal cheeks.

"Oh—I'm—do you ever eat in our café?" she stammered.

"I never have," said he, "but I shall. Gus must wait on me."

"I—I work there, too," said Evelyn. "You won't see me—I'm past the door. I'm the—checker."

"I shall peep through the door. Gus will show me which it is," said Stephens.

She blushed and was speechless. Her ready, courageous flow of retort failed before this elegant and poised stranger.

"By-by," said Stephens, backing toward the door and smiling at Gus and to Evelyn, whose return smile wasn't a smile of amusement.

"Say," called Gus the Bus. "You know, I work in that there café eight months and that was the first time I ever come in t'rough the front door."

XX

GUS THE BUS MEETS A GREAT SORROW FACE TO FACE

HIS RICH FRIEND IS A FRANKENSTEIN

GUS THE BUS was slopping about as usual. Shorty the Waiter was barking at him. He passed on his way to the service bar and he slipped a glance at Evelyn the Exquisite Checker. For several days now Evelyn had seemed changed. Her durable good nature, her perennial calm, had been disturbed. He had caught her several times looking pensively up at the ceiling. For the first time that he had ever known it to be so, several of her checks had turned up incorrect.

It was too much for the simple mind of the bus. He had asked her outright and she had smiled a wan, inscrutable sort of a little smile and told him it was nothing—he wouldn't understand—it was nothing. Then she sighed deeply and even he knew it was something.

When Gus emerged to the main room again and started for his station his eyes suddenly opened wide with surprise. There sat young Mortimer J. Stephens, the natty millionaire who had run him down with his little racing car, had treated him so royally, had given him a hundred-dollar bill and had met Evelyn at his hospital bedside.

Gus shuffled forward, beaming foolishly. Stephens looked up from the quarter-acre of menu, saw Gus in his regalia of office, and smiled.

"Hello, Bus," said the rich man. "How is it?"

"Oh," said Gus, blushing. "By me is fine. It don't hurt no more, and I give Efflyn the money what you give me. She saves for me the money."

"Oh, yes—Evelyn," said Stephens. "I don't see her here. Where is she?"

"Oh, she don't sits in the café," said Gus. "She is the chegger. She sits outside from that door what he swings over there."

"That's right—so she told me. Are visitors allowed there?"

"I don't know," said Gus. "But I guess you could go if you want."

Stephens had finished his dinner, sent it on its way with a happy goblet of vintage, tipped Shorty,

and tossed Gus a dollar for good measure. The checkboy came fawning with hat and coat, helped the young financier and got his. Stephens started for the main door, wheeled about, and pushed open the door to the kitchen-passage.

Evelyn's head was down. She raised it and reached for a piece of paper. Her hand stopped midway. Through the angle of the door she saw the face of Stephens.

Her cheeks flushed as though she had been caught doing something. She tried to smile but she couldn't. Stephens bowed easily, put a foot forward, let the door sweep shut behind him, and came to her shelf. He put his hand across. With shaky arm she brought hers over. He took the soft, white hand in his and pressed it warmly.

"I'm very glad to see you again," said he.

"So'm I," said she, putting it past or through a choke.

Gus came by. He saw in Evelyn's eyes a new light that he could not read. But it was such a bright light. She looked more entrancing to him than ever. Her colour was high. She was athrob with animation.

Stephens smiled to (or at) Gus, and Gus grinned

back to his benefactor, his patron, and his stylish acquaintance.

When Gus returned from the kitchen Stephens had gone.

Evelyn was trying to pick up a pencil, but her fingers kicked it around and fumbled it. She seemed agitated.

Gus spoke to her. She jumped.

"He's a nice feller, that Stephens," said the bus.

Evelyn looked at him searchingly. Gus's face was wide open. No guile nor cryptic irony lay there.

"He certainly is," said Evelyn, with conviction.

"It's nice from him he comes out here and with you he talks—such a rich guy," said Gus.

Evelyn smiled a creamy, oldtime Evelyn smile. She was pleased and Gus's mention of the cause of it brought it out.

"Say," said Gus, after he had waited for an answer in words that he could analyze and got it only in looks which he couldn't read—"Say, after the dinner maybe you go with me by a picher show?"

Evelyn straightened up with a little jerk.

"No, Gus," said she. "I—I can't go with you—that is, to-night—some other night, maybe—yes,

some other night. But not to-night—I can't to-night—I—well, I can't."

Gus shrugged his shoulders. It wasn't unique that she could not or would not go with him. He never expected that she would when he asked her—he only hoped so. She was far above him. She had so many things to do and so many places to go—he wasn't hurt. He wasn't even really disappointed. She wasn't in the habit of accounting to him for her comings and goings.

So Gus cleared away the leakage, the breakage, and the wreckage, shed his pony jacket and slipped on his coat and his overcoat and his hat and his galoshes, waved his hand to Evelyn, pulled a crescent mouth of genial good nature, and heaved ho.

On the corner Gus stopped to get a 5-cent cigar. He gloated over it, turned it about, lighted it, inhaled the first lungful, blew it luxuriantly out, and stepped to the sidewalk. He leaned against the side of the store door in the attitude of a little king, watching the passers-by.

Who was that driving up to the café door? Stephens, in the same little naughty racer that had sent Gus flying a week before.

Gus was about to step across the walk and give

his rich friend a hail, when a plump, active girl stepped out of the doorway and hurried toward the car. She wore a veil. Gus shoved his head forward. She slipped in beside Stephens, who smiled on her, snuggled her comfortably into the seat beside him, cuddled a laprobe over her, slid his lever into position, and sent his car onward.

It passed Gus. He took a second look. His heart sank and the light went out of his eyes. The girl was Evelyn.

XXI

GUS THE BUS SAYS HIS SAY FOR ONCE

TO EXQUISITE CHECKER

ON MILLIONAIRES AND WORKING GIRLS

GUS THE BUS slopped in for luncheon service as usual. His expression was not as chipper as might be; but no one noticed that except Evelyn the Exquisite Checker, for she alone ever looked at the bus closely enough to see anything about him. The only time the others noticed him at all was when he broke something.

Evelyn sat straight up as Gus started by, and waited for the friendly salute. But Gus skated right on. She looked down, a bit surprised, then a trifle piqued.

"Gus," she called.

The bus turned slowly and respectfully toward her, but never raised an eye.

"Yes, ma'am," he said, waiting.

"Why, blunderbus, what's all the matter? Are

you scratchin' me? Or have you got a crick in your neck?"

"No, ma'am," said Gus. "Only when I see you las' night you go ride mit that millionaire feller Stephens in his auto what he hits me with in the —in the front from the café. I thought maybe you no longer got time you should talk with me. I'm only a bus, and he's a——"

"Come out of it," said the exquisite one. And she blushed all pink. She had not seen Gus when Gus saw her. She did not know until then that her secret wasn't one.

Gus looked up at her suddenly and squarely.

For many months she had been his goddess. She had ordered him about, and he had never questioned, hesitated, or whimpered. She made him like it. He was satisfied.

Now she had grieved him sorely.

Gus, who had dreamt fond, wild dreams in the darkness of his own chambers and the silence of his own fancies, had never deluded himself into any ideas that Evelyn was in love with him. It would have been t o absurd. No one could see it any more clearly than Gus. He had never framed himself a conclusion to the big episode of his hungry, dreary life, subsisting

on the crumbs of those who had more than plenty. He had been just satisfied to let it spin along.

His few minutes with Evelyn every day had grown to be the salt of his existence. When she smiled his heart laughed; when she was silent his heart stopped beating; when she looked at him his blood surged and his pulse pounded.

But he had always known that there must be other men—maybe even one other man! He had never dared or wanted to inquire. He was afraid of the answer, whether it were the straight truth or a reprimand for his impudence.

But when he saw Evelyn slip into Mortimer Stephens' car—when he actually saw her beside another man, a man so far beyond his own reach, a man rich, smooth, handsome, powerful—the pall of night had fallen before his pale eyes and the calm, the joy, the ripples of thrill and suspense had gone with the snapping of a finger. And he was sick. And he was sad.

Gus had slept little all night. He couldn't drive away the picture of Evelyn, gay and effervescent, tripping toward that car, and Stephens, suave and complacent, tucking her under the robe. He couldn't banish that sight of them starting off in the cocky

little auto—starting off for where? He wasn't so stupid that he couldn't imagine how perfectly it had all been planned and framed. There must have been an understanding. It was very blue. It was extremely ominous.

Gus looked up into the eyes of his divinity, whose orders he had so long, so obediently, so greedily lapped up. She waited for him to speak.

"Excuse," said Gus. "It's ain't my business what I'm gonna say you, and maybe I'm got a lotta nerve."

"Go ahead—shoot!" said Evelyn, who somehow felt that she wasn't running the job as usual.

"Them kind fellers like Stephens," said Gus. "Them is all right. But they ain't for you."

"Why—Gus! What do you——"

"When a guy like him, what he's got so plenty money, and him runs around with chorus girls and other kinds and he sees you and you are looking to him good and he goes in by the checking table and he makes you a smile and he dates up with you and he is taking you out—no, ma'am, it's ain't no good.

"Now, lemme I should talk. Never before I am butting in. But now it can't hurt you, you should listen what am I saying.

"This kind fellers, to them is a girl what she works is a plaything. He don't mean by you something good. Did he take you by his house? Did he make you introduced by his mother? He asks you maybe you should marry him? I bet you not yet."

"Behave," said Evelyn, trying to make it strong, but registering only a bit of bravado touched with a spice of peevishness. "Mr. Stephens is a perfect gen'leman. He——"

"Sure. He gives you a fine ride. He tells you what you are nice. He says it you got fine eyes and a pretty figger—no? He says you're a swell kiddo and he like you—yes?

"I know how talks them fellers. I hear by the tables. One says by the other one, 'Last night I took out a chicken—ooh! boy! For a working girl she was the best looker I see in weeks. I'm breaking the ice slow, but I guess I gots her. She's crazy about my car and my little parties what I give in them privut dining rooms. I guess she comes aroun' all right.' That's the way talks them kind."

"Oh, take a tumble," said Evelyn. "Mortimer—I mean Mr. Stephens—he ain't that kind of a bird. He treats a lady like a lady."

"All right," said Gus. "Maybe. Maybe not. You remember when he hits me with his auto? He treats me like a gent, too. He says he is sorry and he t'rows by me a hundred-dollar bill. That's is the way with them kind. First they hits you—and hits you hard. Then says they they didn't mean no harm and are they awful sorry. Then they t'rows you money. Then they goes on and they hits another one.

"Everything them guys cures with money. They got more from that than they got from something else. It's what they hit you with and what they cure you with.

"It's maybe I got a lotta gall—but I'm to you talking from my heart, Missus Efflyn. You excuse."

Evelyn choked back a gulp. She shook her head slowly.

"Thanks, Gus," said she. "I know you mean well. I know what you mean. I'm sorry."

Gus went about his work like a man with a headache. The Charlie Chaplin was 'most all out of him. He carried hot plates and he served cold water with reverse precision and unimpassioned inaccuracy. As he passed Evelyn each of the twenty

to-and-fro times he dropped his eyes. He had said his say. There would be no more until she invited more.

Gus had done what he thought he should. He wasn't fool enough to have any faith in the results.

So, after luncheon, when he walked disconsolately down the street, alone, and stopped before a vaudeville theatre of prohibitive admission prices to look at the pictures, he saw something that was only a dull shock, not a stinging surprise—Evelyn, smiling and keyed to buoyancy, entering for the matinee with young Stephens, who looked springy, debonair, and quite at his ease.

XXII

GUS THE BUS FINDS NEW CONSOLATION UNDER EVELYN'S VERY NOSE

INTRODUCING LITTLE KATY BERACEK

GUS THE BUS, thoroughly convinced that Evelyn the Exquisite Checker was madly enamoured of Mortimer J. Stephens and truly believed that the nifty young millionaire would have married her had not his rich old father objected, had given up protesting and arguing.

The freckle-faced fumblefoot had learned what it took many wiser heads longer to find out, that when a woman thinks she loves and thinks she is loved, words sound as of brass and are but so many tinkling symbols.

There is no eloquence that can outtalk the language of a pair of favoured eyes; the logic of Demosthenes could never have built up defense against the charms of Adonis.

So, while he bubbled within he froze his exterior

into a demeanour of frigid calm which deceived nobody.

This thing had been going on now for a month. Even the now and then had ceased for Gus. Evelyn's trysts were regular. Almost every night young Stephens was waiting for her in his insolent little car when she started for home; every day she wore a new corsage bouquet that no poor purse had paid for; the faraway look in her blue eyes was now the accustomed thing for Gus to find there, where he had looked for a glimpse of heaven or a ray of hope.

Gus still bowed politely, coming and going. Diplomatic relations had not been severed. The bus was still ostensibly neutral, though the submarine warfare of Stephens was to him an atrocity repugnant to all international usage. He planned no punitive expedition after the well-dressed bandit, who had crossed the forbidden border and driven off with the lone star of his flag. Gus was a confirmed pacifist. He was too scared to fight.

On the staff of the big café was Katy B -acek. Katy was a sloe-eyed Slovak with a shiny little nose, who swabbed the cement floor about the checking shelf and along the passageway between the

door from the dining room and the door to the kitchen.

Katy was not so hard to look at. Had not Evelyn sat on her throne, blonde and resplendent, always in view where Katy chased dirt, Gus would have watched more closely what Katy did and how she did it. As it was, Katy was awful nice, but she wasn't in Evelyn's class at all.

Gus had met her in a romantic and spectacular fashion. He had seen her every night for months. But he had never really met her until this night.

He was plodding toward the service bar with a tray wobbling on his upturned palm. Ordinarily he might have looked down at the floor. But he was half-turned, sneaking a peep into Evelyn's wandering orbs. Katy was scrubbing in his path. She had just lathered her brush and had laid the soap down beside her. Gus stepped on it.

Into the air, as though he were sitting on a tight wire, went his feet. The tray flew backward and clattered against the checker's desk. He hit the floor, saw Schleswig-Holstein and all the wrongs he had ever done in his life, started to get up and pushed his left foot into the pail of water. That

brought his head up sharply. His face was an inch from Katy's as she knelt beside her pail.

Evelyn howled with silver laughter.

The mortified boy, stunned, sopping, ruined by the breakage, all but shed tears.

He looked into Katy's face.

And, lo! she was not laughing.

She rose from her knees, put her hands under his armpits, and gave him a boost to his feet. Then she wiped some of the soup off his back and the soap off his front and tried to dry his shoe.

And Gus knew that he had found an angel—a sympathizing, goodly soul. She was not Evelyn. Oh, no. Evelyn was ethereal, bewildering, unattainable. But Katy was substantial, comforting, tangible.

How Gus thanked Katy is not to be described here. When such as Gus voices gratitude from the bottom of his wounded heart and such as Katy tells him it's a'right, no description in English can convey it.

But Gus pressed her chunky little arm and Katy blushed and smiled. Evelyn took it all in, half choking with a forbidden laugh.

"Are you hurt, Gus?" called Evelyn.

"Oh, no, ma'am," said Gus, scarcely looking back over his shoulders. "I'm fine." And he smiled

broadly into Katy's wide-open face and she beamed as she wiped her forehead with her bare forearm, dripping soiled suds down her costume.

The meal was over. Evelyn had checked the checks and footed the gross receipts. She was powdering her little pink nose and giving fleet manual reproof to a mutinous lock or two before hurrying forth. She adjusted her dashing Easter sailor, a yard in diameter and decked with a crimson band as broad as the black straw crown was tall.

She reached for her gloves and, as she glanced around, she saw Katy off in a corner. The skirt which had been doubled up and pinned by the edges to her waist during the scrubbing had been let down. It was a weird shade of lavender, but it was new. It was home-made, but it was girlish and not unbecoming.

In one hand Katy, too, held a mirror—a broken bit of glass. With the other she was rubbing her face with a piece of rag. Then she got down her shawl. Katy did not wear a hat—she wore a Madonna drape that might once have been the pride of a lace curtain. She put it on and tied it behind her neck. She looked like a little Bohemian peasant lass on a holiday.

Evelyn smiled at the poor kid and her pitiful fineries. She slipped into her own silk-lined and form-fit suit-coat, economical but not cheap, glanced down at the tips of her shiny boots with tan cloth tops, skirted her shelf and started for the employees' exit.

Her steps were fast. She knew that outside the door a little rakish runabout was standing and in it, ready to press a foot and take her to some wonderful pleasure-garden or for a drive by the swirling water or out upon a romantic country road under the spring moon, sat the knight from another world, the prince who had ushered her into planets above and beyond the unpretty humdrums of her working sphere and her boarding-house orbit.

Katy was at the door as Evelyn reached for the knob. The little scrub-dub held it open respectfully. Evelyn nodded and walked out into the alley. She saw the headlights of young Stephens's car gleaming. He raised his hat and arose to help her mount the footboard.

Evelyn sighed deeply and happily. She adjusted her motoring veil and looked about. She saw Katy follow the wall toward the street and hasten her steps as she drew near a figure, huddled against the

bricks, apparently waiting for her. She saw Katy's arm slip into the crotch of the other's elbow. The two, close and almost cuddly, walked on slowly.

Stephens kicked the accelerator, the gas rumbled through the exhaust, and the little car bounded ahead. It passed Katy and her man. It shot around to curve into the street at right angles. Evelyn slipped a look back at and saw that Katy's companion was Gus the Bus.

XXIII

GUS THE BUS, EVELYN, STEPHENS, KATY

THE MONDAY QUARTET

HAVE NIGHT OF THRILLING EXPERIENCE

WHEN Evelyn the Exquisite Checker, seated beside Mortimer J. Stephens, her young millionaire cavalier, shot out of the alley in his car and got a flash of Katy Beracek, the café scrub-dub, with her arm snuggling in the crook of the good left elbow of Gus the Bus, she did not storm and rage.

Philosophers and psychologists have said that a vain woman resents the loss of even her least eligible suitor and will fight a kitchen maid for a butcher boy's affections just for the triumph.

But Evelyn only snickered. And all the way out to the secluded little dining room and dance floor retreat in a quiet suburb, where Stephens frequently conducted her, she regaled him with the "inside story." Evelyn did not jeer at Gus. She only told

the understanding Stephens of the dumb worship she had found at Gus's hands and Gus's eyes—what a pathetic little episode it was; how sorry she was that poor old fumbling, mumbling, tumbling Gus should have sought in her eyes more than arms' end acquaintance.

Stephens steered the car with one hand and with the other he squeezed one of Evelyn's.

"You're a sweet soul," said he. "And I know how he feels, poor boob. But let us forget him and his kind. Let us just think of one another."

And she squeezed back with her hand.

So Katy and Gus were unthought of as Stephens's stout little racer barked out into the open road and Katy and Gus with heavy steps hiked toward a street car.

Katy showed him which was her tram. Gus helped her up and sat beside her. If she had thought him charming and elegant already, she was convinced the more when he staggered her by paying her fare, a new sensation in Katy's life of suds and snubs.

Not a word said she or he. Now and then Katy surreptitiously sneaked a glance at the stolid, freckled

profile of Gus. He was looking up and ahead—at the advertisements, it would seem, but at nothing, in fact. He was thinking. And not of Katy he was thinking.

She showed him where to hail the conductor and he helped her down at the crossing. She took his arm again and walked him for blocks. Then she said "Here," the first word either had spoken since both had left the restaurant through the servants' door.

She started up a short set of exterior steps and he followed. On the landing he turned twice completely around. He wanted to do something and he didn't know just what to do. Should he say "Good-night" and go, or should he go without saying anything, or should he stay awhile, or should he—what should he do?

Katy Beracek took his sleeve between her thumb and finger and seemed to motion him downward. He saw there was a stone step from the platform to the door. So he unresistingly complied and sat down. Katy spread her Sunday skirt and sat beside him. Gus was in the corner. Katy body-hopped close to him, more or less pinning him there.

Gus sat. Then he thought of something. He had

a cigar. He took it out of his pocket, rubbed a match on his trouser leg, and lit the torch. Katy watched him admiringly. It was such a manly thing to do—to smoke a cigar; and cigars were expensive, too. He was a sport. He was just grand.

Gus blew a cloud through his puckered lips. Oh, it was heaven to Katy. She had dreamed of such. But here it was. Beside her sat a man—a man with a big cigar. She felt a lightness in the head.

He said nothing. Why should he, thought she. He was majestic, monarchical; why should he choke on his dignity and break the momentous silence? She was the weaker. The overtures must come from her. By heredity, by environment, by the usage of those about her and by her highest lights she knew that woman gives and man takes—if he wants.

So she let her hand fall lightly and timorously on his arm, and she bent forward a bit and turned her face toward his, where he got the gleam of her dull eye by the smoulder of his nickel smoke, and said:

"You—you maybe liking me?"

Gus pulled back. He hadn't thought of it at all. It hadn't been a momentous episode with him. It

hadn't occurred to him that it would be the proudest visitation, the most thrilling exhilaration, the first romance in the life of the shabby little thing that sat beside him out in this tenement wilderness on a cold stone.

"Oh, yes," said Gus. "I like you fine. You're a nice girl. Say—what's your name again?"

"Katy," said she. "My name Katy Beracek." (Bareachek she pronounced it.)

"It's a nice name," said Gus. "Mine name it's Gus."

"Oh, sure," said Katy. "Everybody knows your name. You're Gus by the Bus—the friend from that Checker Lady. Everybody talks from you and her in the kitchen."

Gus lit up. It was a revelation. His great affair was talked about, was it? Perhaps he was envied. How little they knew who were jealous of Evelyn's favours to him. However, little it was they knew; and he was credited with an amour with Evelyn.

"Yes," said Gus. "I know her pretty good," and he snapped the white ash off the nose of his domestic perfecto. "She and me we use to go together. I mean I lots times take her home and oncet by a cabhooray and twicet to picher shows."

"Oh," said Katy.

She had not dreamed that it had gone so far. In her circles, if a man took a woman home lots times, to a cabhooray (whatever that was, and it sounded pretty impressive), and to a movie, that meant marriage. A guilty fear, a turbulent sense of philandering mingled with her already bubbling emotions of first love at first hand and the dizzy adventure of a Romeo on her balcony.

"Oh," said Katy. "You marry with her?"

How Gus longed to say it. But he couldn't.

"Well," said he, "I don't go so far like I say that. I don't ask her yet."

"And she?" asked Katy, concerned and puzzled. "She don't ask from you?"

"No," said Gus. "Not yet exactly. In America girls don't asks a man he marries to them. The man he all the time asks."

"It's funny," said Katy with a heart beat of relief. "By us asks the girl or the mother from the girl. Now, my mother——"

"I guess I gots to go now," said Gus. "Well, good-night, Katy. I see you by the service-room in morning."

And he was gone.

Katy clumped off to her shakedown, her little head ringing, her little heart pounding, her little eyes trying not to bleed the tears that wanted to come, though just why she did not know.

In a room of a boarding-house far away Evelyn the Exquisite Checker, in a dimity nightgown, turned out the lights and lay down upon her white bed. Her head was ringing, too, and her heart was hammering. She had been kissed. Stephens, at her door, had impulsively thrown his arm about her and kissed her before she had run, blushing, into the house.

At a club downtown Stephens was telling a crony that he had found a queen in a kitchen; a rose in an alley; a working girl who knew her place—and his. It was refreshing after the others—as refreshing as the hollow-stemmed shell of wine that danced by his elbow on the table.

Through the dark streets the slipshod steps of Gus the Bus scraped upon alien flaggings. He was bent for home—a dreary destination. His head was down. Then he raised it and his features gleamed for a moment—just a moment.

"So—them suckers talks about us—us—ha, ha," thought he.

XXIV

GUS THE BUS BACK ON THE OLD JOB

HIS TRIUMPH; KATIE'S WOE

EXIT MORTIMER J. STEPHENS—VILLAIN!

GUS THE BUS slid wearily in through the employees' entrance. He was hanging his overcoat in his locker when he heard a beloved voice call. He pivoted around. Evelyn the Exquisite Checker sat upon her lofty swivelled throne behind her checking shelf. Gus hurried.

"Yes, ma'am," said he, standing at attention.

Evelyn looked up.

Gus gasped.

The peach bloom was out of her cheeks; the high lights were gone from her eyes; the struggling smile of her lips was a drawn signal of hurt and sorrow.

"Gus," said she, "after lunch I want you to do me a turn. I'll give you a letter to deliver."

He stammered that it would be a pleasure.

All through the luncheon service, as he passed her many times, the bus saw her writing snatches of something between punching checks. Twice he saw her tear up her effort and start again. Her eyes were never raised again to him until, his hour of leisure come, she beckoned him and, holding by one corner a sealed envelope which she extended to him, she said:

"Take this to the address on it—it's aroun' the corner in the bank building. And wait for a answer."

Gus looked. It was addressed to Stephens, the young millionaire whose monopolizing attentions to the idol of his waking dreams had taken the spark out of his life. Gus's jaw sagged. The final, crowning humiliation of all. He was to be a messenger, carrying, perhaps, a paragraph of his own death warrant.

He took the note without a word and started. Evelyn called him back sharply. She reached for the note and was about to tear it down the middle. She wavered. Then she gave it back to him.

"All right—take it," said she with a rocking sigh of determination, resignation, abnegation.

And Gus took it.

At the outer door of Stephens & Son's private bank he presented it. An office boy led him in. Gus took off his hat, wiped his shoes on the edge of the carpet and stood, trembling, at the desk where young Stephens, a cigarette at the end of a phenomenally extended holder between his teeth, was looking at some papers.

Stephens recognized him and greeted him pleasantly. Then he opened the note and read.

Gus did not look over his shoulder. But we may, and if we do we will read what he read; and this is what:

Mr. Mort. Stephens,
DEAR SIR—
Having nothing else to do I take my pen in hand to state that I have read in this A. M.'s papers the announcement of your engagement to a society lady. If you think it was a smart trick to play with the heart of a poor girl who believed the bull what you told her, I beg to differ with you. It is with great regret that I hereby inform you that if ever you comes around me again I'll bust a ketchup bottle over your head. Good night.
Yours broken-hearted etc.,

Stephens set his jaws hard. But he couldn't suppress it. He glanced again at the letter, painfully spelled out, and he burst into a laugh.

He reached for a piece of scratch paper and wrote something on it with a pencil. He handed it to Gus and tipped him a dollar.

"Take this to our mutual lady friend," said Stephens.

Gus extricated his foot from the cuspidor and started back.

He found Evelyn half off her chair waiting for him. He handed her the note. She unfolded it with quaking hands, and this is what she found:

My poor, dear girl:

Having no defense, I accept my dismissal. It is true that I am betrothed. I did not think you would take it so hard. However, I wish you all happiness and assure you that I am always

"Your very good friend,

M. J. S.

A tear of anger, a hot drop of vexation and misery, broke upon the rough paper, which hungrily absorbed it and formed a blister not nearly as large as the lump in Evelyn's throat.

She tore the note into a million fragments and tossed them into the air. She drew a searing sigh. Then the brief struggle was over.

Evelyn's face came up, and, lo—it had a ghost of the old-time smile.

Her face was pale and it did not carry her famously cheerful salute as once it had, but it sparkled with gameness and with grit.

"Blunderbus," she said, her voice a little wheezy, but her heart firm behind it, "you was right—a party what gets out o' her own class gets the worst of it."

"Sure," said Gus, partly understanding and partly dizzy with a wild hope that Stephens had passed out of his life—had passed out of the only chapter of his life in which fortune had written romance and the intoxicating spirits of trembling suspense and the only drops of honey that had ever dripped into his soul.

Evelyn pulled herself up straight. She slid from her high chair and unwrapped a stick of gum—the first she had taken in weeks, as a certain high-bred person had called her attention to the indecorous aspects of gum-mastication—and she reached for her hat.

In a wink she was around the shelf and had her fingers clasped about Gus's elbow.

Gus sizzled at the touch.

He raised his blinking eyes to make it out.

"Gus, old skeezicks," said Evelyn, "be a sport

an' take me to a movie. We got an hour—let's enjoy life while we've got the chance—whadde you say?"

What could he say?

It was all too much. And strange, in the tumult of his billows of joy, there came into his heart a great fear—a fear that some day another Stephens might come and again Evelyn would stray "out of her class." And was not he, Gus the Bus, beyond his depth with Evelyn? Wasn't the moral that she had just read him applicable to himself?

Wasn't it a danger, wasn't it trifling with the burning edges of the forbidden for him to resume his fanciful dreams, his absurd hopes? Wasn't it?

And as they started for the door an obstacle was in their path and they had to walk around it.

Gus glanced down. Katy Beracek, the little scrub-dub, on her knees in the sloppy suds, had looked up in time to see what was happening.

As though frozen she held her pose, her left hand resting on the sopping brush upon the floor, her right suspended with a parallelopipedon of glistening soap clutched in the fingers.

Gus was too busy with his own surging emotions to see her twice. He did not catch the message of

her features. He was thinking of Evelyn and her rebuff; he was thinking of himself and his future fears; he was not thinking of little Katy and her wounds; he only muttered to himself Evelyn's bitterly heroic words:

"A party what gets out o' her own class gets the worst of it."

XXV

GUS THE BUS WILL STAY HERE A WHILE

VACATION POSTPONED

EVELYN AND THE BOSS SPOOF OUR HERO

GUS THE BUS sidled up to the throne of Evelyn the exquisite Checker and deposited 15 cents in the Gus the Bus Trust and Savings Bank—a stranger had given it to him because he had inspired the only laugh that stranger had found since he left home.

"How much I gots now?" asked Gus.

"What's it to you?" demanded the president of the bank testily.

"Maybe I use some of him," ventured Gus.

"If I o. k. the pa'ticular investment which you contemplate," said the exquisite. "Are you gonna buy a little Bethlehem, or is the war bride a brunette?"

"Oh, no, ma'am," said Gus. "I don't get married. But I'm thought maybe I might vacation."

"Maybe you might is very well put," said Evelyn. "This here establishment ain't in the custom of givin' its important officials no vacations. You'd be missed pretty hard around here, you would."

"Ain't that's awful," exclaimed Gus. "I thought I am wanting maybe two weeks fresh airs and I should see a cow and a pigs and plenty grass."

"Them are perf'ctly Christian and healthy long-in's," agreed the blond divinity. "And I guess you're right. Tell you what: You go in and see the boss and ask him."

"Coming, sir," said Gus, as he started.

The bus found the boss at his desk. He stopped in the doorway, shifted feet, rubbed his hands down his trouser-legs, bent forward, pulled back, coughed slightly. The boss turned.

"Well, blunderbus," said he pleasantly. "What's your grievance now?"

"Oh, no, ma'am," said Gus timidly. "I don't. I am coming here to—I am was I just walked over here—I should—I—want a vacation."

"Oho," responded the proprietor. "And where is this that you want to go?"

"I couldn't say it. In the country—by a farm. In Schleswig-Holstein we live on a farm. I am by

that used to. Always we had flowers and side orders——"

"Side orders?"

"Sure—side orders and garnichures—beans and potatoes and spinniges and——"

"I see—vegetables. You are longing for a breath of fresh air out in the open, eh?"

"You hit the nail without a hammer," said Gus.

"I don't know," mused the boss, half aloud, but meant for Gus's protruding ears. "I can understand your desire to see the fields and the growing things. But how can you think of leaving here?"

"Is here plenty other buses what they is almost so good like me," said Gus.

"Oh, it isn't that end. We would stagger through some way, crippled as we undoubtedly would be. Why, even railroad presidents have to have vacations, and when they go away their absence has to be endured in one way or another. But I was thinking of Evelyn."

"What is with Efflyn?" gasped Gus, starting frontward.

"Haven't you noticed?" said the proprietor, in a hollow voice.

"No, I don't. What is with her? What is it did I noticed it?"

"Shorty!"

"Huh? W-wh-what?"

"Are you blind? Haven't you been observing Shorty of late? He has been hovering about Evelyn's desk paying her little attentions, making eyes at her—oh, those eyes—haven't you caught those eyes? He looks at her as though he would eat her up."

"Say," said Gus. "Everything what's left in the kitchen that pig Shorty he eats up. But he don't eat Efflyn—no, sir, I bet you."

"But he is rushing her—wooing her—making a play—paying ardent courtship—sparking her. Why, it's been the gossip of the place for days. And you—the nearest and most interested, as is usual in such instances—are the last to find out!"

Gus paled beneath his freckles. It was a new fear. He had not sensed anything wrong or different. He cleared his throat, put his left foot back of his right foot, squared his fourteen-inch shoulder-breadth, inflated his full inch of chest expansion, and spoke like a soldier and a man:

"Thanks. I guess I ain't want a vacation. I never didn't like farms, anyway."

And he wheeled and went back to his stand.

All through the evening he breathed on the neck of Shorty the Waiter, his officer in command, dogged him, spied on him, trailed him, shadowed him.

Once or twice he thought he detected a sidewise glance toward Evelyn from the low-browed knight of the napkin. But then—everybody had to look sidewise at Evelyn now and then.

The evening was killed and he had gathered no important information. Shorty's behaviour seemed the same as it had always been since that time long ago when Evelyn had turned thumbs down on Shorty's brash advances and had told him in curt and undiluted checker English where he alighted.

But the boss's harrowing words would not be forgotten or ignored.

So Gus strutted to Evelyn's desk as she was about to shut up the works, and he bristled with determination as he said:

"I want you should tell me, Missus Efflyn—what he does to you, that Shordy?"

"And what could he do to me?" asked Evelyn lightly. "The best thing that bandy-legged bantam could do to me 'd be to stop a ketchup bottle or a empty stein, dext'rously directed by yours truly."

"This Shordy feller he makes on you eyes?"

"If he does," said Evelyn, tossing her shoulder, "it's a one-sided game, like callin' a flat buildin' rough names."

"Then that boss he kids me."

"Sure," said Evelyn. "It ain't Shorty at all. It's him—the boss—he's the party what's makin' eyes at little Ev."

Gus closed his eyes a moment and thought deeply. Then he dug into his pocket and brought out a two-dollar bill.

"Here," said Gus, as he laid it on the shelf. "I was hiding this two thalers to have extra on the vacation. But now I guess I don't need him."

"You grafter," snapped Evelyn. "Palming dough on your banker, huh? That goes in the sinkin' fund. And now that's over, why ain't you gonna need it on your vacation?"

"Because," said Gus resignedly, "there ain't gonna be no vacation."

XXVI

GUS THE BUS A COMMISSIONED OFFICER

CHIEF OF STAFF

TAKES COMMAND AND PROVES A TYRANT

"THEM Mexish fellers," said Gus the Bus, "them is gonna get plenty gelicked I bet you."

"I'll take half that bet," said Evelyn the Exquisite Checker. "But I'm surprised at you, a brave, strong hyphen, not enlistin' with the first o' the nation's gallant defenders."

"Well, I tell you," said Gus. "It's like this way. Somebody is got to stay here he should do the work and he should be company and protectings for the womens and the childs. That's I'm him."

"I feel safer now," said the exquisite.

Two waiters, a bus, and a dishwasher from the café had marched off in their khaki regimentals to entrain, encamp, endure, and endeavour. The boss

had promised to pay their wages and hold open their jobs. Evelyn had patted each warrior on the shoulder and told him to "give those greasers one" for her. And they had said they would. Then business resumed its normal aspect when regulars were sent from a restaurant help agency to replace the volunteers.

The busboy who had gone was the colonel of the lot—the head or chief bus. It had been his job daily to see that every other bus had his shoes shined with stove polish, his dickey washed in streaky swabs, and his finger nails gouged clean within reason. For this he got a quarter a week extra. He had been the oldest in the service. His leaving gave the seniority to Gus. And, to his head-spinning and blushing amazement, the boss notified him that he was now First Chief of the Department of the Bus.

Gus straightened his back and tried to express his appreciation, but he choked on it.

So he dashed to the recruiting station near the kitchen, ordered a couple of humble busses out of his way, and demanded to know where the rookie was.

Out of a corner came a swarthy youth with little, black, beady eyes, who stammered something unintelligible and then pointed to his own breast.

"You are a bus?" squeaked Gus, rather in challenge than in inquiry.

"Mmmm," grunted the new boy.

"You are looking like the hell," said Gus. "C'm here."

The silent, misanthropic, shivering lad stepped forward.

"What your name is?" demanded Gus, the newborn martinet.

"Yousouff," came from the hollow chest of the other.

"Never I heard such a name," snapped Gus. "What you are?"

The puzzled lad shook his head.

"What kind you are?" repeated Gus, raising his voice. "You ain't Irish. You couldn't be Russian. I know you don't come from Chermany. From where comes you once?"

"Cairo," groaned Yousouff.

"Oh, then you are a Swedish, huh?"

"Me Egypt guy."

"I'm having you," said Gus. "Egyptish."

Yousouff nodded his head vigorously in pleasure at being understood, catalogued, and classified.

Gus motioned him to follow, and started him through the manual of arms—how to pick up silver,

how to polish a plate on his sleeve, how to pick up a chunk of ice between a thumb and three fingers without shooting it, how to recover a fumbled butter tab and save an error, and the rest of the technique of the profession.

Gus was a new man. The humility of his bearing had been replaced by the officiousness of an admiral. He felt power.

Poor Yousouff had many occasions that day to tremble at the iron hand of the new monarch of the caraffe. Gus rode him, scolded him, picked on him, fussed at him, and had the tyro doubled up with fear most of the time.

As a drillmaster Gus rose to sublime heights. He pelted Yousouff with new and rigid rules. He frowned on the other half-dozen waiters' helpers who were now in his brigade. When Shorty ventured to "call" Gus, himself, on an occasion of palpable misconduct toward a patron on whose sleeve Gus poured half a saucer of tartar sauce, Gus shot him sparks out of his pale but indignant eye and ignored the profanity entirely.

By evening he had the veteran busses disciplined, orderly and trembling. Yousouff, his every minute a cross between inquisition and admonition, had ac-

quired a headache which didn't help him think any faster. He didn't have many flashes ordinarily. At the end of this day he didn't even have a spark left.

Evelyn had been watching the day's procedure with amusement and warm interest. The transition in Gus was a revelation. He had turned from Eliza to Simon Legree in a wink by the addition of a title and a quarter a week.

She failed of her usual attention from Gus that day. Being a man of affairs, his mind was on business. He had little thought for the lighter matters which occupy busy men in their lighter hours. His brow was furrowed, his step was rapid, he toted the fate of the café on his meagre shoulders and he couldn't stop.

Evelyn flagged him shortly before taps.

"Well, Captain Gus," asked she, "how goes it?"

"Terrible," said Gus, wiping his forehead. "Them calfheads they is awful hard to manidge, I tell you, Missus Efflyn. I got plenty to put up from. Keeping them six loafers they should do right their works is a job for a feller."

"How's the new boy?"

"Oh," said Gus indulgently. "He ain't so rotten for a feller what three weeks ago he was driving a camel."

XXVII

GUS THE BUS LEARNS WHY WE CELEBRATE

FROM EXQUISITE CHECKER

NEW VERSION OF HISTORIC DOINGS

"WHAT'S the matter everybody gets ready it should be a kinda picnic day on Fourt' of Youlie?" asked Gus the Bus.

"Don't you know what the Fourt' o' July is about?" asked Evelyn the Exquisite Checker.

"No, ma'am," said Gus. "By me the Fourt' it's just the same like the fift' oder any other day. But I am look on the calendar and it's red that day. Why that day should be red when is all the other days is blue oder black oder green?"

"Well, it's this way," said Evelyn. "Years ago there was a gen'ral and his name was Wash'n'ton. He was a brave old scout, he was. He was a hero. Maybe you seen his pickchers. He alwus wore a white wig an' golfin' pants.

"Well, when this here nation was very young and

we didn't have so much dough for bridges and ferry-boats an' stuff like that, Wash'n'ton had a little business on the other side of a river named the Delaware, somewheres in New Jersey. It was a little piece o' confeyedential business he had with a English gen'ral name Cornwallis. This here Cornwallis was a cocky party, what thought us Americans couldn't fight. Well, he found out before he got back to Piccadilly that he pulled a boner.

"But I was tellin' you about Wash'n'ton crossin' the Delaware, wasn't I."

"Sure," said Gus. "How him got acrost?"

"Wash'n'ton an' his handful o' brave boys plans a s'prise party for this here Cornwallis," said Evelyn. "They knew that the English soljers would be celebratin' the Fourt' o' July across the Delaware and gettin' pretty pickled. So they fixes it to mosey in on 'em and give 'em a little hail.

"Well, the Delaware River is full o' ice. Big chunks is floatin' around in it like—like——"

"Like a chincher-ales highball," suggested Gus.

"No," said Evelyn. "Like in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' or somethin'. The snow was howlin' and the wind was beatin' down, and Wash'n'ton and his boys, what had put in a tough week in Valley

Forge, with rags on their feet for shoes and their heads wrapped up in napkins where they was wounded or becus they didn' have no hats, takes their flintlocks and starts to cross that there Delaware.

"They didn' have only a few boats, and them was only plain rowboats like the kind what you rent in the park for 35 cents a hour. He says to his men: 'Lads, this looks like a boob job. But I'm goin' t'rough. Are you with me?' Was they? Well—to a man—every one o' the dozen or so of 'em what he had. 'All right, then,' says Wash'n'ton, 'rowboat ahoy,' and they climbs in and starts across.

"The river is floatin' with big bunks o' ice as I said, and every minute the radiator o' the boat biffs against one of 'em and it don' look as if Wash'n'ton is gonna get to the other side at all. But he stands in the bottom with one foot on the rail o' the boat and his hand over his eyes and he whispers steerin' directions. It had to be awful quiet becus, as I told you, this here was to be a unexpected visit.

"His men is blowin' on their fingers and their poor bare feet is freezin' and it looks like they're all gonna get drowned. But they're game and they stick."

"Yes, yes," said Gus. "Did they getting acrost?"

"Did they?" said Evelyn. "That's just what I'm tellin' you. You don' think we'd be celebratin' that day if they hadn't o' got across, do you?"

"But you are saying them English they are already celebrating. If the day he is celebratinged because them Washingtoners they got acrost, what was them Englishers celebrating they should be getting soused on the other side?"

"Gee, you get me so out o' patience, sometimes I could choke you," said Evelyn.

"I don' know what the English was celebratin'. It was Fourt' o' July—wasn' that enough? Anybody knows that's a holiday."

"Maybe," said Gus. "Anyhow, what happens when them gets acrost?"

"This happened," said Evelyn. "Wash'n'ton and his fistful o' men lands quietly, half froze to death, and starts pussyfootin' through the snow to the swell headquarters where this here Cornwallis and his thousands o' redcoats is clinkin' glasses and gettin' good and spiffy-eyed. Our minute-men surrounds the joint and watches through the windows, waitin' for Wash'n'ton to give the signal. Wash'n'ton is waitin' for 'em to get steweder. When

he thinks they've had enough he shouts, 'At 'em, fellers,' and our forefathers rushes in.

"Say—they was a grand goin's-on then. Took by s'prise, more than half shot as it was, the English wasn't no more match for Wash'n'ton's men than the Cubs is for a ball team. Our boys kills, capchures, and busts up the whole army, steals their shoes and boats, eats their swell chow, takes a few swigs o' their first-class booze—it's a complete vict'ry.

"And that's why we still celebrates the Fourt' o' July."

"That's a grand story," said Gus. "You say a dozen Americaners are licking thousands from Englishers?"

"Sure," said Evelyn. "If we had thousands and they had only a few, they wouldn' be nothin' to celebrate. This was one o' the most wonderful put-overs in hist'ry."

"I bet you it was," said Gus. "This here Washingtons he was some gink. No wonder what you names after him streets and barber shops and breakfast foodses."

Late that evening Gus stood in deep thought against a post. His left foot was resting on his right

foot and his hands swung limply. Of a sudden he stiffened, turned his head toward the swinging door behind which the checker's desk was rooted, and started.

"Say," cried he to Evelyn. "How it happens if Washingtons he goes acrost in them rowing boats on the Fourth from Youlie, is in that river ice?"

Evelyn caught her breath midway.

"I—you—well," she stuttered, sparring for time and wind. "I guess our climate was diff'rent them days."

"I guess so," said Gus. "It don' snows no more on Fourth from Youlie."

"No," said Evelyn. "It mostly rains."

"Maybe you might is very well put," said Evelyn. "This here establishment ain't in the custom of givin' its important officials no vacations. You'd be missed pretty hard around here, you would."

"Ain't that's awful," exclaimed Gus. "I thought I am wanting maybe two weeks fresh airs and I should see a cow and a pigs and plenty grass."

"Them are perf'ctly Christian and healthy longin's," agreed the blond divinity. "And I guess you're right. Tell you what: You go in and see the boss and ask him."

"Coming, sir," said Gus, as he started.

The bus found the boss at his desk. He stopped in the doorway, shifted feet, rubbed his hands down his trouser-legs, bent forward, pulled back, coughed slightly. The boss turned.

"Well, blunderbus," said he pleasantly. "What's your grievance now?"

"Oh, no, ma'am," said Gus timidly. "I don't. I am coming here to—I am was I just walked over here—I should—I—want a vacation."

"Oho," responded the proprietor. "And where is this that you want to go?"

"I couldn't say it. In the country—by a farm. In Schleswig-Holstein we live on a farm. I am by

that used to. Always we had flowers and side orders——"

"Side orders?"

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"What is with Efflyn?" gasped Gus, starting frontward.

"Haven't you noticed?" said the proprietor, in a hollow voice.

"No, I don't. What is with her? What is it did I noticed it?"

"Shorty!"

"Huh? W-wh-what?"

"Are you blind? Haven't you been observing Shorty of late? He has been hovering about Evelyn's desk paying her little attentions, making eyes at her—oh, those eyes—haven't you caught those eyes? He looks at her as though he would eat her up."

"Say," said Gus. "Everything what's left in the kitchen that pig Shorty he eats up. But he don't eat Efflyn—no, sir, I bet you."

"But he is rushing her—wooing her—making a play—paying ardent courtship—sparking her. Why, it's been the gossip of the place for days. And you—the nearest and most interested, as is usual in such instances—are the last to find out!"

Gus paled beneath his freckles. It was a new fear. He had not sensed anything wrong or different. He cleared his throat, put his left foot back of his right foot, squared his fourteen-inch shoulder-breadth, inflated his full inch of chest expansion, and spoke like a soldier and a man:

"Thanks. I guess I ain't want a vacation. I never didn't like farms, anyway."

And he wheeled and went back to his stand.

All through the evening he breathed on the neck of Shorty the Waiter, his officer in command, dogged him, spied on him, trailed him, shadowed him.

Once or twice he thought he detected a sidewise glance toward Evelyn from the low-browed knight of the napkin. But then—everybody had to look sidewise at Evelyn now and then.

The evening was killed and he had gathered no important information. Shorty's behaviour seemed the same as it had always been since that time long ago when Evelyn had turned thumbs down on Shorty's brash advances and had told him in curt and undiluted checker English where he alighted.

But the boss's harrowing words would not be forgotten or ignored.

So Gus strutted to Evelyn's desk as she was about to shut up the works, and he bristled with determination as he said:

"I want you should tell me, Missus Efflyn—what he does to you, that Shordy?"

"And what could he do to me?" asked Evelyn lightly. "The best thing that bandy-legged bantam could do to me 'd be to stop a ketchup bottle or a empty stein, dext'rously directed by yours truly."

"This Shordy feller he makes on you eyes?"

"If he does," said Evelyn, tossing her shoulder, "it's a one-sided game, like callin' a flat buildin' rough names."

"Then that boss he kids me."

"Sure," said Evelyn. "It ain't Shorty at all. It's him—the boss—he's the party what's makin' eyes at little Ev."

Gus closed his eyes a moment and thought deeply. Then he dug into his pocket and brought out a two-dollar bill.

"Here," said Gus, as he laid it on the shelf. "I was hiding this two thalers to have extra on the vacation. But now I guess I don't need him."

"You grafter," snapped Evelyn. "Palming dough on your banker, huh? That goes in the sinkin' fund. And now that's over, why ain't you gonna need it on your vacation?"

"Because," said Gus resignedly, "there ain't gonna be no vacation."

XXVI

GUS THE BUS A COMMISSIONED OFFICER

CHIEF OF STAFF

TAKES COMMAND AND PROVES A TYRANT

"THEM Mexish fellers," said Gus the Bus, "them is gonna get plenty gelicked I bet you."

"I'll take half that bet," said Evelyn the Exquisite Checker. "But I'm surprised at you, a brave, strong hyphen, not enlistin' with the first o' the nation's gallant defenders."

"Well, I tell you," said Gus. "It's like this way. Somebody is got to stay here he should do the work and he should be company and protectings for the womens and the childs. That's I'm him."

"I feel safer now," said the exquisite.

Two waiters, a bus, and a dishwasher from the café had marched off in their khaki regimentals to entrain, encamp, endure, and endeavour. The boss

had promised to pay their wages and hold open their jobs. Evelyn had patted each warrior on the shoulder and told him to "give those greasers one" for her. And they had said they would. Then business resumed its normal aspect when regulars were sent from a restaurant help agency to replace the volunteers.

The busboy who had gone was the colonel of the lot—the head or chief bus. It had been his job daily to see that every other bus had his shoes shined with stove polish, his dickey washed in streaky swabs, and his finger nails gouged clean within reason. For this he got a quarter a week extra. He had been the oldest in the service. His leaving gave the seniority to Gus. And, to his head-spinning and blushing amazement, the boss notified him that he was now First Chief of the Department of the Bus.

Gus straightened his back and tried to express his appreciation, but he choked on it.

So he dashed to the recruiting station near the kitchen, ordered a couple of humble busses out of his way, and demanded to know where the rookie was.

Out of a corner came a swarthy youth with little, black, beady eyes, who stammered something unintelligible and then pointed to his own breast.

"You are a bus?" squeaked Gus, rather in challenge than in inquiry.

"Mmmm," grunted the new boy.

"You are looking like the hell," said Gus. "C'm here."

The silent, misanthropic, shivering lad stepped forward.

"What your name is?" demanded Gus, the newborn martinet.

"Yousouff," came from the hollow chest of the other.

"Never I heard such a name," snapped Gus. "What you are?"

The puzzled lad shook his head.

"What kind you are?" repeated Gus, raising his voice. "You ain't Irish. You couldn't be Russian. I know you don't come from Chermany. From where comes you once?"

"Cairo," groaned Yousouff.

"Oh, then you are a Swedish, huh?"

"Me Egypt guy."

"I'm having you," said Gus. "Egyptish."

Yousouff nodded his head vigorously in pleasure at being understood, catalogued, and classified.

Gus motioned him to follow, and started him through the manual of arms—how to pick up silver,

how to polish a plate on his sleeve, how to pick up a chunk of ice between a thumb and three fingers without shooting it, how to recover a fumbled butter tab and save an error, and the rest of the technique of the profession.

Gus was a new man. The humility of his bearing had been replaced by the officiousness of an admiral. He felt power.

Poor Yousouff had many occasions that day to tremble at the iron hand of the new monarch of the caraffe. Gus rode him, scolded him, picked on him, fussed at him, and had the tyro doubled up with fear most of the time.

As a drillmaster Gus rose to sublime heights. He pelted Yousouff with new and rigid rules. He frowned on the other half-dozen waiters' helpers who were now in his brigade. When Shorty ventured to "call" Gus, himself, on an occasion of palpable misconduct toward a patron on whose sleeve Gus poured half a saucer of tartar sauce, Gus shot him sparks out of his pale but indignant eye and ignored the profanity entirely.

By evening he had the veteran busses disciplined, orderly and trembling. Yousouff, his every minute a cross between inquisition and admonition, had ac-

quired a headache which didn't help him think any faster. He didn't have many flashes ordinarily. At the end of this day he didn't even have a spark left.

Evelyn had been watching the day's procedure with amusement and warm interest. The transition in Gus was a revelation. He had turned from Eliza to Simon Legree in a wink by the addition of a title and a quarter a week.

She failed of her usual attention from Gus that day. Being a man of affairs, his mind was on business. He had little thought for the lighter matters which occupy busy men in their lighter hours. His brow was furrowed, his step was rapid, he toted the fate of the café on his meagre shoulders and he couldn't stop.

Evelyn flagged him shortly before taps.

"Well, Captain Gus," asked she, "how goes it?"

"Terrible," said Gus, wiping his forehead. "Them calfheads they is awful hard to manidge, I tell you, Missus Efflyn. I got plenty to put up from. Keeping them six loafers they should do right their works is a job for a feller."

"How's the new boy?"

"Oh," said Gus indulgently. "He ain't so rotten for a feller what three weeks ago he was driving a camel."

XXVII

GUS THE BUS LEARNS WHY WE CELEBRATE

FROM EXQUISITE CHECKER

NEW VERSION OF HISTORIC DOINGS

WHAT'S the matter everybody gets ready it should be a kinda picnic day on Fourt' of Youlie?" asked Gus the Bus.

"Don't you know what the Fourt' o' July is about?" asked Evelyn the Exquisite Checker.

"No, ma'am," said Gus. "By me the Fourt' it's just the same like the fift' oder any other day. But I am look on the calendar and it's red that day. Why that day should be red when is all the other days is blue oder black oder green?"

"Well, it's this way," said Evelyn. "Years ago there was a gen'ral and his name was Wash'n'ton. He was a brave old scout, he was. He was a hero. Maybe you seen his pickchers. He alwus wore a white wig an' golfin' pants.

"Well, when this here nation was very young and

we didn't have so much dough for bridges and ferry-boats an' stuff like that, Wash'n'ton had a little business on the other side of a river named the Delaware, somewheres in New Jersey. It was a little piece o' confeyedential business he had with a English gen'ral name Cornwallis. This here Cornwallis was a cocky party, what thought us Americans couldn't fight. Well, he found out before he got back to Piccadilly that he pulled a boner.

"But I was tellin' you about Wash'n'ton crossin' the Delaware, wasn't I."

"Sure," said Gus. "How him got acrost?"

"Wash'n'ton an' his handful o' brave boys plans a s'prise party for this here Cornwallis," said Evelyn. "They knew that the English soljers would be celebratin' the Fourt' o' July across the Delaware and gettin' pretty pickled. So they fixes it to mosey in on 'em and give 'em a little hail.

"Well, the Delaware River is full o' ice. Big chunks is floatin' around in it like—like——"

"Like a chincher-ales highball," suggested Gus.

"No," said Evelyn. "Like in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' or somethin'. The snow was howlin' and the wind was beatin' down, and Wash'n'ton and his boys, what had put in a tough week in Valley

Forge, with rags on their feet for shoes and their heads wrapped up in napkins where they was wounded or becus they didn' have no hats, takes their flintlocks and starts to cross that there Delaware.

"They didn' have only a few boats, and them was only plain rowboats like the kind what you rent in the park for 35 cents a hour. He says to his men: 'Lads, this looks like a boob job. But I'm goin' t'rough. Are you with me?' Was they? Well—to a man—every one o' the dozen or so of 'em what he had. 'All right, then,' says Wash'n'ton, 'rowboat ahoy,' and they climbs in and starts across.

"The river is floatin' with big bunks o' ice as I said, and every minute the radiator o' the boat biffs against one of 'em and it don' look as if Wash'n'ton is gonna get to the other side at all. But he stands in the bottom with one foot on the rail o' the boat and his hand over his eyes and he whispers steerin' directions. It had to be awful quiet becus, as I told you, this here was to be a unexpected visit.

"His men is blowin' on their fingers and their poor bare feet is freezin' and it looks like they're all gonna get drowned. But they're game and they stick."

"Yes, yes," said Gus. "Did they getting acrost?"

"Did they?" said Evelyn. "That's just what I'm tellin' you. You don' think we'd be celebratin' that day if they hadn't o' got across, do you?"

"But you are saying them English they are already celebrating. If the day he is celebratinged because them Washingtoners they got acrost, what was them Englishers celebrating they should be getting soused on the other side?"

"Gee, you get me so out o' patience, sometimes I could choke you," said Evelyn.

"I don' know what the English was celebratin'. It was Fourt' o' July—wasn' that enough? Anybody knows that's a holiday."

"Maybe," said Gus. "Anyhow, what happens when them gets acrost?"

"This happened," said Evelyn. "Wash'n'ton and his fistful o' men lands quietly, half froze to death, and starts pussyfootin' through the snow to the swell headquarters where this here Cornwallis and his thousands o' redcoats is clinkin' glasses and gettin' good and spiffy-eyed. Our minute-men surrounds the joint and watches through the windows, waitin' for Wash'n'ton to give the signal. Wash'n'ton is waitin' for 'em to get steweder. When

he thinks they've had enough he shouts, 'At 'em, fellers,' and our forefathers rushes in.

"Say—they was a grand goin's-on then. Took by s'prise, more than half shot as it was, the English wasn't no more match for Wash'n'ton's men than the Cubs is for a ball team. Our boys kills, capchures, and busts up the whole army, steals their shoes and boats, eats their swell chow, takes a few swigs o' their first-class booze—it's a complete vict'ry.

"And that's why we still celebrates the Fourt' o' July."

"That's a grand story," said Gus. "You say a dozen Americaners are licking thousands from Englishers?"

"Sure," said Evelyn. "If we had thousands and they had only a few, they wouldn' be nothin' to celebrate. This was one o' the most wonderful put-overs in hist'ry."

"I bet you it was," said Gus. "This here Washingtons he was some gink. No wonder what you names after him streets and barber shops and breakfast foodses."

Late that evening Gus stood in deep thought against a post. His left foot was resting on his right

foot and his hands swung limply. Of a sudden he stiffened, turned his head toward the swinging door behind which the checker's desk was rooted,. and started.

"Say," cried he to Evelyn. "How it happens if Washingtons he goes acrost in them rowing boats on the Fourth from Youlie, is in that river ice?"

Evelyn caught her breath midway.

"I—you—well," she stuttered, sparring for time and wind. "I guess our climate was diff'rent them days."

"I guess so," said Gus. "It don' snows no more on Fourth from Youlie."

"No," said Evelyn. "It mostly rains."

on me and they're say to theirself they bet I'm some feller what I'm gots such a schatzchen.

Of course you're know it's all this is a lieing. But all them loafers here they're making me the bull what they got and who are they and by them ain't money nothing and every place they've been and in town they don't takes orders from nobody but they're the whole boss. So why I shouldn't bluff a little bit by myself, huh?

They would told me they gots a girl that kind if they would thought of it firstest, so I'm only beat to it them cheap skates what I'm bet you they're work by a groceries or squirting soda waters.

No, it don't hurt nobody. And it's make me feel mighty proudish and glad, becaus when I'm get all wounded up by my story I'm begin I believe it mineself and I'm shut mine eyes and I'm rave on and rave on.

You're know why is that? I'm tell you.

And when I'm tell you, don't you're getting mad, please.

This wasn't no whole lie. If course the part what I'm say she's love me and kiss me and I'm buy

for her a ring and she's say she marries with me and about the house and the dog and I'm so happich, that's all is a rotten lie.

But when I'm tell that is there such a lady I'm don't lie. I'm can't tell even the whole truth from her becaus I'm don't got words it should garnish up such a dish.

And when I'm say I'm love her like anything and I'm miss her and pretty near cry becaus she ain't here or I'm ain't there, is it the truth. And when I'm say nobody ain't got like her a girl I know what I'm say—them ain't, nobody. No ma'am.

And when I'm say the first time I'm see her my head he spins and my heart he makes like hammers and my feet is get coldish and my head is get hottish, it's ain't no lie, Missus Efflyn.

I'm tell you why ain't some of them things lies and is others. Becaus the girl what I'm see when I'm shut my eyes, the lady what I'm thinking when I'm tell how she's sweet—well, she's you; you, and nobody else.

Now you know what kind liar I'm.

Good night. I'm can't wait till I'm again see you.

Awful respectful

GUS.

XXXI

GUS THE BUS BACK HOME AND HAPPY BRINGS COSTLY GIFT

EVELYN GREETS HIM: THEN ALL IS DARK

GUS THE BUS, his face so brown that the freckles looked white, made his grand re-entrance into the café, back from his vacation. It was a spectacular advent, as always. He saw Evelyn the Exquisite Checker; he beamed, gagged, stretched out his right hand, stumbled on the threshold, and slid at her on his face.

When she had helped him up by the nape of his collar, he slowly got his breath and stammered:

"Well—here am I."

"So I see," said the exquisite. "And it's good to see you—the same old flopping Gus. You're lookin' great."

"I'm feeling even more greater," he purred. "It's the finest thing on a vacation to get back from it."

Just what Gus said to Evelyn it would not be fair for a kindly chronicler to set out in detail. Under stress of strong emotions our hero does not work at his best. But he told her with his eyes, in his shattered English, with the hungry adoration of his pale eyes, through the tremor of his slim frame and in the incoherent sputterings of hyperbolic exclamations, how bubblingly happy he was to see her again, to be near her once more, to breathe the same air that she inhaled, even if it was the air tainted with the odoriferous steams and vapors from the near-by kitchen.

"Never again I should be away from you," he vociferated.

"See?" said she. "You're got to get away from me to find out that I'm pretty nice."

"Oh, no, ma'am. Always I knewed it. But never before it's so grand to look on you."

And she smiled; for, though she knew that somewhere, some time, Gus would step over the edge of the altitudinous cliff, and while she had a heart and had no wish to be cruel now or later, she cherished and encouraged the adulation of her busboy cavalier.

Every woman loves to be loved. Evelyn the Exquisite Checker was more level-headed than most

of her pink and blond sisters. But she was a woman.

Gus's soul sang within him all the evening. Sometimes he accompanied the carol with the crescendo of breaking crockery or pitched it to the tinkle of falling silverware. Love was in his bosom, and he had come back to his goddess.

Each time that he passed her on his pilgrimages to and from the kitchen he smiled gallantly, cut a caper, waved his off hand or said, "Oh, you Efflyn!"

Even the guests noted it, for he was smiling. And a smiling busboy is as rare as a flying pig—any habitué can tell you that.

The supper service dragged and waned and groaned and passed away.

And then Gus, through for the night, walked to his locker and came forth with a package. He approached the checker's shelf and laid his offering, wrapped in tissue paper, before her.

She widened her eyes and undid the paper. Within she found a celluloid haircomb, set with blue stones above a band of nearly gold. She choked a smile, drew on a look of delight, and thanked him enthusiastically.

"Oh, 't 'sawright," he protested. "I'm buying

this for you in a store by the railroad station in the country where I'm taking the train."

"It's gorgeous," she cried. "I bet it cost a lot."

"Sure," said Gus.

She put it in her handbag. Gus looked disappointed.

"I won't wear it to-night," she said, sensing his hopes. "It's too swell. I'll keep it for nash'nal holidays and Easter Sundays."

Which appeased and pleased his simple, gullible sensibilities mightily.

"Missus Efflyn," he ventured, "I didn't seen you so long till to-day. Maybe I could take you by home to-night?"

"But I'm not going home," she answered.

"No? Where you go?"

"To the depot. My train leaves in forty minutes."

"Depot!" Gus gasped. His pulse seemed to stop. "Train!" His head grew light and his feet lead. "Wh-wh-where you're going?"

"Why, my dear boy, didn't I tell you? I'm goin' away to-night—on my vacation."

It was a body blow. For weeks, during his stupid stay in the uninteresting wilds, he had dreamt

of this reunion. He had tossed through nights of unrest, longing for his accustomed daily sight of his fairy ideal. The days had gone slowly. But they had gone. He had come back to her beating, bleating, pop-eyed, and a-tremble. And now——

"N-no, you didn't told me," he said, haltingly, stunned. "I didn't think you are going away. No, ma'am."

"But Gus, my dear boy, I've got to have a vacation, too. I've worked hard all year in this sweaty job, with bad air and the same old come-and-go every day, includin' Sundays. Don't you think I got a little good time comin'?"

"I guess maybe yes. But not so quick. I mean, I didn't thought you go away right away when I'm just coming back."

"This is the date the boss sets for my time off for good behaviour, so this is when I got to go. You can take me to the depot if you want to."

If he wanted to!

It was a sad little leave-taking. They reached the door of the Pullman and the coloured porter took Evelyn's handbag. There was still ten minutes to spare, so Gus and Evelyn walked up and down beside the cars.

"All aboard!" called the conductor.

Evelyn started. Gus hung on. At the step mercy came over her. She turned and lightly kissed him. She stepped up as the train pulled out. She waved from the platform.

"I'll drop you a line, Gus," she tossed him.

"I'm hope you has a grand time," he called back huskily.

And the train whirled away. Gus looked as long as he could see its smoke. Then he crawled home to the boarding-house and wrote a letter to his mother in Schleswig-Holstein.

"I'm very happy here, mother," he wrote. "But it's awful lonesome. I wisht I was married or something."

XXXII

GUS THE BUS MEETS SATAN'S DAUGHTER ON ANGEL'S THRONE

MISSIVE FROM AFAR JARS WEIRD SPELL

GUS THE BUS came to work with a "what's-the-use" spirit in his breast. What was the use, in fact? Evelyn the Exquisite Checker, his inspiration, his beacon of destiny, his all in everything, wasn't there—she was off somewhere on a vacation.

He walked to his locker and made his "change," substituting the monkey jacket of trade for the sack of society. He turned toward the swinging dining-room door. But between him and his port his pale eye encountered something—something substantial and not easily overlooked. It was the substitute or alternate checker.

Gus's breath stopped abruptly. Here was a vision, a large vision, too.

Her hair was flaming red, done up in a coiffure

that would have made Venus weep. Her round face was powdered from the forehead to the line of demarcation where the chest ended and the low-cut waist intruded. Her lips were scarlet, aglow with enamel like the tonneau of a brand new touring-car. Her eyelashes wore beads that made them look like mourning-pins. Her nostrils were dyed maroon. Her teeth were mostly of glittering gold, polished until they reflected back the boisterous rouge of the lips. She was a riot.

She caught Gus's gasping, gaping gaze.

"Hello, nut," she sang out. "Wanna buy me, or what? I'm on a risin' market, so get your money down."

"I—I donnow what are you meaning," stuttered the bus.

"Oh," said she. "I thought f'm the way you was see-sawin' me you was figurin' on retirin' me to a life o' luxury or eatin' a piece out o' my ear. Speak up. What's in your bean?"

"I—I didn' mean no insulting, lady. But I'm see you the first time and you're so swellish a looker."

"Ah—I thought so. Love at first slant. Well, you look pretty funny to me, too. What's your name, filbert?"

"I'm Gus."

"Gus, eh? Well, you look it. My genteel given monicker is Hortense, pronounced 'Awrtahngse.' I ain't exac'ly French, but for an Irish girl I'll get by. So throw it into high when you come speedin' at me, and put on consid'able dog, becus I'm a fast stepper and a high liver. Do you get me, or am I missing?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Just as I thought. Anyway, I'm pleased to meet you, Gus, and this will go down as a red-letter day in my life—bein' admired by the head bus right f'm the barrier. Proceed—a waiter is approaching with a tray, and I hear jooty callin' me."

Gus proceeded—dizzily.

All through the evening a new and strange emotion burned in his narrow bosom. This siren, seated on the sacred throne to which he had so often cast the hungry, yearning looks of his first great passion, had thrown something over him.

It wasn't the same sweet, wholesome glow that Evelyn's blond and rounded presence had exerted. It was a jumpy, jerky, sizzling, itchy sensation.

Gus was encountering what so many a man has

met, puzzled over, fought against, surrendered to. It was infatuation superseding love. It was the wireless current of the hypnotic charmer messing up the calm and orderly vibrations of the true transmitter.

He blushed and flushed; he jumbled and fumbled; he shivered and shook; he stuttered, he sputtered, and he muttered; he flew through air and he lit on his head. He didn't understand it, he didn't attempt to analyze it. All he knew was that she was the most bewildering creation he had ever seen, and that he was drunk with looking at her.

The service fared accordingly. What with pouring soup into steins and offering oyster forks with lemonade, Gus put in an evening alive with thrills, recriminations, blasphemy, and amazement.

But he managed to live through the meal without losing a limb, and when the last grumbling guest had paid his check and his respects, Gus waltzed toward his locker to resume the wardrobe of the outer world.

Hortense was taking off her paper cuffs as he passed.

"Where do we go f'm here?" she warbled, winking the left eye slowly, but with wonderful eloquence.

Gus stopped dead.

"Wh-where you like it to go?"

"Oh—we might take a taxi and burn up a few gallons, then bust open a bottle o' grape and stow away a partridge or a few squab," she suggested with dramatic ease. "Or would you rather just take in a fox-trot joint and guzzle a few fancy concoctions between the ground and lofties?"

Gus stood frozen.

"Do I make myself clear?" she shot. "Or is my languidge fawran and mysterious? Or is it?"

"I'm think so," said Gus.

"Very well, then. Slip on your top hat and your spats and we'll make a killin' on the rialto. Would you wear your pearls, if you was me, or will just the diamond stomacher and the emerald tarara answer?"

"No, ma'am."

"Exac'ly. I'll have James call the limousine and the footman'll be in direc'ly to carry out your cane. Meantime I'll be puttin' on my gloves and galoshes, you poor simp!"

It was too much. Gus opened his mouth, but nothing came out. He could not follow the rapid delivery, and its patois was strange, elusive, and uncanny. Moreover, he was under the influence of

the odour of some rich, penetrating oriental perfume, which oozed from the red-haired sorceress and possessed him.

He felt that she was aiming fun at him. Yet he thought she might seriously let him escort her out—out somewhere, he didn't know where, he cared less.

"Oh, by the way," she interposed. "Is this here for you?"

And she reached behind the shelf and sorted out from a little pile of mail a postal card.

Gus took it. He turned it over and read, in tall, angular script:

Arrived safe. It's fine here. Wish you were along. Be true to me and don't take any Chinese money. EVELYN.

Gus read it twice—painfully, then more clearly. The blood flew to his cheeks. He crushed the postal to his chest, then placed it tenderly into the inner pocket of his vest. Then he looked up into the beaded eyes of Hortense. And his voice was calm—almost cold in its steady proclamation:

"Good-night, Missus Lady. I guess I go now home."

And he did.

XXXIII

GUS THE BUS HEARS FROM HEADQUARTERS

WARNED AGAINST MEDUSA

EVELYN THE E. C. TELLS RURAL LEGENDS

GUS THE BUS was treading on rarefied ozone, for inside, under his white dickey, he carried next his heart a letter which had come to him just before time to "go on" for the evening.

The rush of water-serving and the business of bussing made it unsafe and undiplomatic to attempt to read the letter at that time, so he waited until the meal was over. Then he slipped the precious envelope from its safety deposit retreat, opened it tenderly and with trembling digits, and read:

My Dear Gus:

When I read your letter where you almost took that there red-headed Jane what's subbing for me home, I says to myself it was mighty well for you that's all the farther it went.

A man what can't stay true to the divinity of his

heart for two weeks while she's away getting back the bloom in her cheeks ain't much of a sticker.

She's got a lot of gall, that bulletine has. Where does she get this here making eyes at my Gus? If she done it while I was around and able-bodied, I'd bounce a ketchup bottle offen her phoney locks and make them good and red for her. The idea!

If she wants to steal somebody, stake her to Shorty. He's a lowbrow roughneck and in her class.

That'll do for that.

It's kind of chilly out here amongst the boobs. I sit most of the day with a wool sweater on, looking like a Eskymo on a hunk of iceberg. But I suppose this wild life is doing me a lot of good. I don't see just where, but they say that after a season of the hardships of society a ballroom butterfly like me is got to get away where it's so quiet the silence hurts.

It's so still around here nights I can't sleep. Every once in a while I drop a glass on the floor or hum "Walking the Dog," just to know there's life left.

The man what built this house died last year at the age of 97. He hadn't been off the farm in 33 years. I wonder how he knew when he was dead.

In the mornings I mostly sit around, having no place to go, and in the afternoons I mostly loaf, having nothing to do. But after supper—they call cold pork and a glass of buttermilk supper here—the excitement of the evening makes up for the dullness of the day.

That's when the fat housekeeper waddles out to the front porch to slap moskeetas and buzz me the scandal.

I know the inside history of every family for forty miles from the county seat. I don't know the people, but I know all about them, and I can talk as glib about Lizzie Sallers as I can about Eva Tanguay, which is fifty-fifty, becus I never seen neither of them.

I learn that Lizzie is a wild kind of a girl. Are you interested to know that she sat out on Hacherbauer's lawn till 9.30 P. M. one night two summers ago with Hank Buggles? Well, she did, I'm reliably informed. I don't know Hank, but from all I hear he's the black sheep of the township, having been divorced once, mixed up in several interesting affairs, and once arrested for shooting a partridge out of season.

Anyway, Lizzie sat out on that lawn with this here scapegrace till a hour when all decent people was either in bed or playing seven-up for the drinks. For this she is shunned by all the church-going white women in this here township, and little girls is warned that if they don't mind their ma they'll be in her class, or a wolf will eat them.

I also learn with great surprise that the minister what comes here to preach every second Sunday was sued for breach of promise by a woman in 1895, and that a paragraft was printed about it in papers as far away as Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire.

I seen him last Sunday. He's a little shrimp what looks like he don't get enough to eat. But the fat housekeeper tells me that ain't what's the matter. He's bowed down by his sorrow of long ago.

It seems he sparked a widow woman what owned four hogs and a wooden house and a eighth of a

section which her husband left her when he was called away during a misunderstanding with a bunch of delirium trimin's.

The minister, who was a young guy then, come to give the deceased frau consolation. Well, the kind of consolation she wanted could be got for two dollars at the license window, adding a gold ring and flavouring to suit with a sprinkling of orange blossoms.

This here minister party had other designs. He had his holy eye on a youthful soubrette what was doing three a day in this very boarding-house where I am now raining as queen of all I survey. She was the chambermaid, pigfeeder, table-server, busgirl, dishwasher, and butter-churner—and her name was Tillie.

Well, Tillie give him the eye right back.

So they went to the other minister what comes here every third Sunday, and they were married.

With that, the fat housekeeper tells me, the whisky widow lets out a shriek like her house was on fire, runs to the main lawyer in the county—he was mainer than the other one, I guess—and she hollers for justice. She wants ten thousand bucks' worth of justice.

Well, Tillie and her husband goes on a ten-mile drive for their honeymoon, in a buggy. Just as they steps out a sheriff slips the happy groom the good news.

The suit was one of the bitterest what was ever fought in this vercinity. And the jury gives the weeping derelict a judgment for six cents. And he's been a sad man ever since. It wasn't the amount

that weighed on him, though he ain't very prosporous at that. It was the moral effect—finding him guilty of having played with the trusty heart of a bereaven female all the time he was dealing off the bottom for that gay young kitchen gazell, Tillie.

So you see, the nights here is pretty interesting when I can sit and freeze the tip of my nose and listen to them two stories. Then I go to bed, and, as I blow out the smelly oil lamp and retire to my mattress, which is arranged like mountains and valleys to lay on, my head is swimming with the excitement of the day and the thought of what a wicked world we're living in and how thankful you and me should be that we live in a big city where we can stay pure.

Good-night, kid. Look out for that red-headed dame. Red means danger, so be where.

With best love, EVELYN.

XXXIV

GUS THE BUS CLOWNS TRAGEDY CLIMAX

CRASHING DÉNOUEMENT

EVELYN IS BACK—BUT SHE'D BEEN BUSY

GUS THE BUS, clutching a witch's hat of newspaper full of flowers, kicked his flying feet to the Pullman portal as the train squeaked and ground to a stop. And the very second face he saw was that of Evelyn the Exquisite Checker, alighting, back on earth from her vacation.

She beamingly shook hands with her red-haired seneschal and he led her to where he had a taxi anchored. Poor as he was, Gus was never a piker where Evelyn was concerned.

All the way home she told him with little jumps and squeals how happy she was to get back to the United States—she had been in Wisconsin.

It was an almost perfect half-hour. Gus, his cheeks glowing till they matched his crown, listened and purred. There was only one freckle on

the face of his shameless happiness—Evelyn hinted that she had met a chap in the country whom she expected to meet again in the city. She tossed it off as an aside. But Gus's seismograph was wonderfully sensitive in recording coming Evelynquakes, and he shivered a little at the reference.

At the door Gus helped her out and bade her au revoir, for he had to go to work, whereas Evelyn's vacation had yet another twenty-four hours to run. So Gus paid off the chauffeur, walked to a street car, and rode to the café.

Three minutes after he entered the back door Gus was on his way to the dining room, robed in the livery of his bushood—the alpaca monkey jacket, the turnover collar and shoestring tie, the waterproof dickey and the vest cut like a croquet wicket upside down.

His feet felt light and his head lighter. For he was thinking of to-morrow, when his golden-haired divinity would be again upon her throne behind the checker's stand.

He even smiled back at Shorty's scowl, took his periodic "call down" with no grief, and shuffled away to serve with unusually happy efforts and customary results.

Several parties were to be silvered, napkined, and watered. He attended to them in his first-class manner, upsetting only one tumbler and scarcely damaging the gown of a stout lady with a treacherous butter-tab.

The head waiter, between the tables and the door, was meeting all comers and ushering them to seats.

A smartly dressed gentleman entered, holding open the door for a lady who was close behind. The head waiter was just a trifle startled when he saw her, but headwaiting is headwaiting, so, poising his right hand in its most elegant attitude and delsarting beautifully with the index and little fingers, he led the way to the one unoccupied table in Shorty's division, drew out two chairs, and ceremoniously seated the pair.

Shorty capered over to take the order. It was to be a table d'hôte. He started for the kitchen and met Gus just outside the kitchen door.

"Two oysters, soups, fishes, entries, pies, demis an' cheeses at No. 19," he bawled, meaning that the bussing for that table required the tools for those courses.

Gus turned, grabbed a couple of water glasses, two butter plates, two oyster forks, two fistfuls of

miscellaneous silver, a bowl of crackers, a baby bottle of tabasco, a tin can of paprika, salt and pepper shakers, a flask of ketchup, a container of horse-radish and two halves of a lemon, and pirouetted gayly toward table No. 19.

He reached it and was just about to turn the water glasses face up when he chanced a glance at the lady. Down went the plunder on his tray to the floor, en masse, one mess.

Evelyn the Exquisite Checker jumped half out of her chair at the crash. She glanced about and her eyes met those of Gus.

In them she might have read the confused and combined expressions of a wounded antelope and an abused jackass.

Gus picked up the remnants, the fragments, and the salvage. His fingers fumbled and his heart sagged as though it were sinkered. He swabbed and swept and picked and shoved the débris back on his tray, then awkwardly straightened himself.

Evelyn was smiling. The natty interloper, her vis-a-vis, was guffawing.

Gus shouldered his wrecked properties and made his way past the door into private quarters and solitude.

So—it had come to this. In the hour of his happiness, when he was toasting to-morrow in the intoxicating hopes and reflections of a renewed romance, fate had called upon him to be the bungling clown and menial underling at the feast of his goddess and the sleek rival who had wooed her behind his back and boldly espoused her now before his very eyes.

So—she had secretly made an appointment with this man to meet him almost immediately on her return. There hadn't been time for this to be accidental. She had purposely brought her new admirer to the café where Gus could see and suffer. She had climaxed it all by sitting where his cup of half-and-half—bitterness and humiliation—could overflow when he must serve them both, like an undertaker's assistant at his own funeral.

And, to top it all, he had cut the most grotesque figure imaginable as he did it.

It was too much. Gus, the head bus, called another of the waiters' assistants and assigned him to do the honours at table No. 19. He announced that he had been taken suddenly ill. And it was true.

He wilted into a chair near the kitchen door and

held his head. For nearly an hour he sat there thus.

Then, with a gruelling sigh, he crawled to his locker, divested himself of the uniform of his mean office, donned the apparel of a citizen, and started for home.

He turned from the alley out upon the walk, around the corner past the front entrance—the customers' exit of the café.

And there he saw Evelyn and her gallant, merrily, buoyantly coming out.

He turned and saw them start on airy feet toward a limousine.

And he, with feet of stone, started for his street car.

XXXV

GUS THE BUS IN MIGHTY RESOLUTION SHUTS OUT LIFE-LOVE

JUST SEE WHAT EVELYN DID ABOUT IT

GUS THE BUS came to work after a sleepless night. His eyes were as red as his hair. But his heart was calm.

He had fought the good fight and steeled himself to the final resolution—to tear Evelyn the Exquisite Checker out of his hopes and his bosom.

He had gone over in his tortured mind the whole history of their romance—his romance, her little joke. He recalled how he had been bewitched on first sight by her blond beauty, her plump undulations, her tantalizing smile, and her regal demeanour, sitting there high on the checking throne, the avenging goddess of the cash-register.

He did not blame himself for falling in love. Any strong man might have succumbed to less.

But what had been the result? He had wor-

shipped and fawned and bought expensive eau de cologne and movie tickets, he had danced attention —and he had made a general jackass of himself.

In return for which, what? Whenever she had found another man who had more to offer, who was handsomer, richer, more Americanized, more dashing, she had left Gus stunned and bewildered at the roadside, and taken up with the enemy.

He had forgiven her the sorry affair with young Stephens, the dapper millionaire who had turned her golden head and then served her as she had served poor Gus.

He had complacently shut his eyes to the illustrated souvenir postal cards that she got continually, to the mysterious telephone calls which he had heard her engage in, to the unaccounted-for evenings when she slyly slipped away from him as he was waiting to escort her to the night car, to the flowers that she sometimes received, and to the hints of tango parties and auto rides that she periodically dropped.

But now the parting of the ways had come.

When she presumed to bring a new admirer into the very café where their love had outlived all its trying vicissitudes, when she took this malignant interloper to the very table where Gus himself must

serve the feast for his own farewell, this was more than much too much.

It was going to be hard, but it was the only way.

He must draw a curtain over the past and hew himself a new and hitherto unexplored future. Would there be another woman? Maybe. But Evelyn the Exquisite Checker had exited from his life drama.

He had to pass her on his way in. She looked up, radiant and smiling, arched her siren lips to their most fascinating flash, lifted her cushioned little white hand and waved it fetchingly as he shuffled by.

" 'Lo, blunderbus," she gurgled.

"How are you do," said Gus stiffly—and he never raised an eye, but just kept on to his locker.

The exquisite checker turned her eyes, startled. She knew her Gus. Something had come over him.

She had not far to seek into her own memory for the cause. She remembered full well the episode at the table when Gus had dropped a trayful of dishes and cutlery on seeing her the guest of the young Romeo whom she had met in the country.

"Oho!" she mused. "So Young Von Hindenburg is got a grouch on little Evelyn, huh? Well—we'll see what can be did about it."

She sought to engage him as he returned, clad in the regimentals of the bus brigade, on his way to the field of commissary service. Gus was polite—severely so. But that was all.

"How're you feelin' to-night, old bus-o'-my-heart?" she coquettishly wafted him.

"Oh, aw right—thanks," said Gus, his eyes on the floor.

"You look as though you'd been picked up an' dragged t'rough," she observed.

"No, I'm mighty fine," he countered. "I didn't neffer felt no better like I'm feel now. I got to go by the dining room—is lots of work and Shordy he giffs me a fit if I'm don't there."

And he looked at the door.

"Any time this here Shorty bawls you out, you tip me off," said she. "He's got a lotta gall shootin' off his face at my fav'rite steady. You should worry what that roundhead hash-trucker says."

"He's my boss," said Gus stiffly. "He could make me or he could break me. So better I pay him a liddle attention."

And without a smile, without an obeisance to the queen, her courtier-cavalier-jester proceeded through the swinging portal into the banquet hall.

Evelyn now knew there was something serious the matter. Ordinarily, at the first overtures of friendly greeting from her, Gus would have stumbled all over his ungainly feet to blushingly acknowledge his pleasure, no matter how hurt he had been. But this was a new maneuver.

And it kept up all through the meal, emphasized each time that the bus had occasion to pass the reviewing stand.

Several times she hailed him on pretexts of business. Once she gave him a check to take to a waiter—he carried out the errand with dignity and dispatch, but with impersonal severity. Another time she asked for a glass of water. He fetched it, served on a saucer, diffidently and deftly delivered—but no asides, no encroachment past the bare formalities.

In fact she let herself out to break through his frigid new armour. But Gus, with German tenacity, "stuck."

The evening waned. It was within ten minutes of going-home time. Patronage had tapered down to a few lonely guests dotting the big meal-room.

Evelyn got out her cosmetics and her mirror, touched up her lips, puffed a little powder on her

cute nose, ran the pencil over her eyebrows, rubbed her finger nails with the chamois polisher, archly loosed a curl here and there—and waylaid Gus as he was making his return journey to the locker to put on his civilian potpourri of clothing.

"Gus," she simpered. He stopped.

"Gus, dear," she trilled. He turned.

"Gussie—I haven't any one to take me home tonight." He felt a sizzle through his veins.

"Won't you, hon?" He fell!

Two minutes later you might have seen Evelyn, with a wise expression round the corners of her pretty mouth, waiting for the street car beside Gus, a wildly jubilant glow over his features, a dime in his hand, a new-old light in his pale blue eye.

XXXVI

GUS THE BUS, LIKE SOL IN HIS GLORY RIVALS THE LILY *BUT, LIKE A FLOWER, FADES WITH DUSK*

GUS THE BUS, his heart restored to its normal tempo (frettevolo), sniffed the cool air of the oncoming season and got a hunch. Summer had tapered off and fall was in again.

Fall suggested clothes—raiment—adornment.

So Gus went into the woollen sock under the mattress, where he planted what tips and scrapings he held out on President Evelyn of the Gus the Bus Savings and Trust Company (not inc.) and went shopping.

And when he emerged he was a picture.

Riding the red waves of his hair was a grass-green fedora with an autumn-leaf brown band.

The suit was cigar-ash gray, with four-inch cuffs on the trousers, a pinchback effect that a riding master would have fainted over, and buttons that shone like the love-lit eyes of a two-day bride.

The shoes were mulatto without face powder—yellow and shiny.

And—set yourself for the big noise—niftily angled northwest to southeast, he held in his left hand a near-bamboo cane that could have hooked a beer-keg or felled a horse.

As he pranced down street he knew all eyes were bent upon him. Nor did he shrink. He walked briskly, as becomes a lone boulevardier on an afternoon airing, but that was to give pep to the getup rather than to flee past the gaze of the surprised.

The big moment was to come. And, as he swung open the oscillating door to the checker's grand stand, it came.

Evelyn the Exquisite Checker was footing a totally footless and bootless total. She was perplexed and she was vexed. So orderly and efficient a checker, she abhorred errors. Her fair brow was corrugated and her fair mouth was drawn down at the corners as she bit the rubber on her pencil and cudgelled her brain.

The better to compute the answer, she raised her eyes from the ticket to look up into vacancy as she cogitated.

The sweep of her outward, upward eye halted

with a kick. It blinked and hesitated. Then it came to and took in the iridescent spectacle of Gus the Bus, greeting the new season.

Gus stopped, blushed, stepped on his foot, and stood awaiting the verdict. He got it.

Up from the chest Miss Evelyn let forth a whoop of laughter that rattled his teeth.

"You—you don't—it ain't nice my new clothings?" he stammered.

Evelyn recovered her wind.

"Nice?" she howled. "Say—you look like you just stepped out of a funny paper. Who thrun you down and made a three-colour lithograph outta you?"

"I—I'm just buy these clothings. The man tells me, he says, is this the swellishest suit from clothings he ever seen."

"Swellish ain't no name for it," said the checker. "It's hellish. You look like the city guy that led the little country girl astray."

"I never did," said Gus, frightened.

"Oh, but you could. If you ever stepped into Fort Wayne with that musical comedy wardrobe they'd think you was a Porchewgeese prince, or maybe even a travelling man. What circus are

you ballyhooin' for, or are you jus' a plain society butterfly? You look like a pousse cafe."

"The man he tells me——"

"He tells you all wrong. What does a eight-dollar suit clerk know about swellness? Solomon with all his wives was never done up like any part o' you. Zowie!"

Gus was going to say something, but his throat was dry. So he turned and slunk to his locker.

A few minutes later he came forth in his bus-business wear, the run-down black shoes, the shiny black trousers, the alpaca monkey jacket, the washable dickey and the shoestring tie.

He sailed the turbulent waters of his craft through dinner, depressed and silent. He navigated back and forth with cargoes of water and butter, passed Evelyn many times, but kept on going each time too fast for discourse on personal matters. As he was making his final trip the exquisite one called to him.

"Gus, dear," she simpered. "Are you gonna take me home to-night?"

"You're afraid or something?" asked Gus.

"Oh, no—but you know how it is: my heart longs for the c'mpanionship of a strong, handsome man

when the hours of toil is over. And whenever my heart longs like that your picher comes in my mind. Do we, or am I crabbed?"

"I take you by your home," said Gus curtly.

Evelyn touched up her nose, straightened a ringlet or two, slid on her suit-coat and was ready.

She turned her eyes toward the locker-room, setting her face for the return of Gus, shading her eyes against his sartorial radium.

But Gus, when he came out, was wearing the well-rubbed, dowdy, threadbare clothes that he had worried along in through the summer.

As they reached the sidewalk Evelyn touched him on the arm.

"Gus—I didn' mean to kid you outta them clothes," she said tenderly and regretfully. "They're grand. I hope you didn' take my joshin' serious."

"Oh, 'ts awright," said Gus.

"To-morrer you wear that mardi gras outfit, kid. I won' tease you about it no more."

"No, I guess I'm wear these clothings a while," said Gus.

And just then, prancing by with the breezy assurance of a gent who knows he is attracting envious

eyes, strode Nick, the meanest of the busboys under Gus's régime. And he wore a grass-green fedora, cigar-ash gray suit, and mulatto shoes, and in his left hand, poised northwest to southest, was a near-bamboo cane.

XXXVII

GUS THE BUS IS BEARCAT DETECTIVE

LANDS HIS MAN

GETS $10 REWARD AND ENCOMIUMS

GUS THE BUS found Evelyn the Exquisite Checker nervous and flurried when he came in.

He inquired with his sad, harried eyes. So she called him over and told him:

"I'm comin' down to work a few minutes ago. I step off a car and a feller bumps into me. I take a back step, he takes off his kelly and apologizes to beat a sossiety leader. Well, I go on my way.

"When I come in here I start to open my handbag, and what do you think? They ain' no handbag. I ain't got only the leather handle in my hand. The rest of it was cut away.

"And I can bet you forty bucks to a Mexican jit that that apologizin' party done it when he bumps me."

"Ooh," said Gus. "Ain't that's too bad."

"About eighteen dollars and sixty cents too bad. And there goes my powder pad, my lip stuff, my han'k'chif, my keys, my address book, and a lot o' plunder what every woman carries in her hand baggage. Say—I'd like to get my two hands on that bowin' safeblower—I'd bend a chair-leg over his sconce."

"What he looks like?" asked Gus.

"Oh, he was about 25, smooth-shaved, wore a black dicer, and a long, green benny. He had a pearl with di'monds stickpin in his tie. The tie was green, too."

"If I see that feller, I——"

"You'll what? If you seen anybody what you thought was a crook you'd run and yell for help," said Evelyn, at outs with herself and the world, and therefore ready to challenge anything, anybody, or any statement.

Gus withdrew in confusion.

The last of the patrons were being served at the last meal of the day. At one of Gus's tables sat a nifty young man buying champagne for a flaming woman, who wore a red hat and a green waist. Her

hair was golden—so were most of her teeth; her eyes sparkled, so did her hands, which bristled with gems.

The man and the woman were both in their wine goblets. She was boasting to him of the value of her "stones." He cut in with an observation that his own were no nickel's worth.

"See this pin?" he demanded, taking between his thumb and finger the protruding head of his cravat-ornament. "That pearl alone is worth four hun-d'ed smackers. And the little blue-whites aroun' it goes for three hund'ed more."

She looked. So did Gus.

Hello! It was a pearl surrounded with diamonds. And it nestled in a green tie.

Gus got all excited. His brain began to work. It was not a quick brain, but it was a German brain, and therefore an efficient brain.

On the table, face up, lay the man's checkroom ticket. Gus gave it a sidewise glance and fixed the number. Then he sneaked over to his friend the checkroom burglar and asked to see the deposit corresponding with that bankbook.

The youth led our Gus in and showed him a long green overcoat and a black derby hat.

Gus ran to Evelyn. He motioned her off the

checker's stand. She hesitated. But his manner was impelling. She tripped down. He led her to the crack in the swinging door, which he held ajar so that she could peer through the opening into the dining room at an angle affording vision of the particular table.

"Him!" gasped Evelyn. "Wh-what'll w-we do?"

"Leave it by me," said Gus, and he skated out.

A minute later Gus entered the front door of the café with Dave Barry, the husky taxi starter, who had once been a pugilist, and who carried a kick in his hand that would jar a freight car.

Gus pointed and whispered. Dave strode across the room to where the boasting person was flamboyantly entertaining his female. Dave strode behind him, stopped, looked over to Gus, askingly. Gus nodded up and down answeringly.

With a sudden thrust Dave's four fingers went down into the patron's collar. With a howl of surprise and fright the stranger half rose and exploded an imprecation.

Dave lifted him the rest of the way, then started to drag him by his limp feet toward the swinging door. Evelyn, who had watched the whole proce-

dure, ran in fright behind her partition and scurried up on her elevation.

Dave kicked the door open and bounced the prisoner up to the checking table, where Evelyn sat like a magistrate on the bench or a queen in judgment.

"Is this the gink?" asked Dave.

"That's him," said Evelyn.

The man looked up and recognized her. He tried to shrink away to nothing.

"What'd you do with this here lady's pocketbook?" demanded Dave.

"I—I threw it away."

"Oh, ye did. Well, what did you do with what was in it?"

"I—kep' it."

"How much?" asked Dave of Evelyn.

"Eighteen-sixty and my junk."

"How much'll square it?"

"Oh, about twenny-five."

Dave, with his free hand, reached into the man's pocket and found a flat bill fold. He laid it on the counter and slid out a pile of bank notes.

"Here," said he, as he shoved $25 to Evelyn. "And here—your reward," as he passed a $10 bill to

Gus. "And this is for my trouble," and he slid a $10 bill in his own pocket. "And Shorty says the check is $12.90, so I'll just take fifteen for him, which'll be a reas'nable tip. An' a clam for the hat boy."

And he put the rest of the money back in the book and slipped the book back in the thief's pocket. Then he yanked him back to his lady, ordered her to come along, waltzed them to the checkroom, got the man's clothes, threw him half up the stairs, threw his things after him, and stood there seeing that they made the rest of the distance to the street.

"You're some detective, Gus," said Evelyn.

"You betche," said Gus. "But that Daiff, he's some lib'ral feller."

XXXVIII

IF GUS THE BUS ONLY HAD A "OO-BOAT" AND A VENGEFUL HEART!

EVELYN "GOING WITH" SWELL STRANGER

A SMARTLY clad gentleman and a plump, blond young woman, engrossed in conversation and oblivious to anything but one another, turned the corner and drew up at the door of the café. The man lifted his hat with his neatly gloved hand and stood at attention as the lady smiled a leave-taking which could mean nothing less than "auf wiedersehen" to the freckle-faced, shabby youth who, standing behind a pillar, watched the procedure with pained and anxious visage.

Do you still doubt the identities of the sidewalk triangle? The toppy chap was the friend whom Evelyn the Exquisite Checker had met in the country and re-met in the city; the lady, of course, was she. The agitated onlooker who (as the innocent

bystander always does) was getting all the worst of it was, therefore, Gus the Bus.

Gus had not seen the invader for several weeks. After the dish-spilling episode, when he had disgraced himself on the occasion of the cruel need of waiting on his inamorata and her suitor, the subject had not been mentioned, and Gus had complacently chased the cloudy image from his mind.

Now it came back, revivified, multiplied. So Evelyn was still going about with that well-dressed interloper? She had probably never ceased. Gus alone had been asleep.

Evelyn proceeded through the front door. Gus, with heavy hoofs, circled to the employees' entrance in the rear.

Gus sneaked to his locker and assumed his shiny alpaca duds, the busboy's wardrobe of the café supernumerary. He started past Evelyn's high seat toward the dining room, intending to ignore her.

"What ho! Goostav!" hailed Evelyn heartily. "Did you fall into money, or are you just nach'ly upstage?"

Gus stopped abruptly and pivoted slowly, methodically, till he stood in midfloor, two yards from Evelyn, looking her straight in the pretty face.

"I ain't proud," said he. "You got wrong there. If I'm proud, a dog in the street what he ain' got a bone to eating, he's a king."

"How do you do?" warbled Evelyn. "Since when this here humbleness, blunderbus?"

"I'm saw you outside," he said, steely cold and right into her teeth. "I'm saw you and that —that dudish loafer what I'm waiting on youse it ain't so long ago. What he does here with you?"

"Well, of all the gall I ever heard, you got more crust than a brass baboon," exclaimed Evelyn. "I guess if I wanna accep' the escort of a gen'man, I don't have to get your p'mission in writin'—or am I the slave o' your lamp, Mr. Gus Aladdin?"

"You don' haf to you should do nothin'," retorted Gus. "It ain' what you gots to do what makes it break mine heart—it's what you don' gots to do, but you do it chust the same. You like him, that feller? You go marry by him, maybe?"

Evelyn exploded with a merry detonation. But Gus thought he detected a brassy ring to the tinkle of her laugh.

"Marry that boob?" she screamed. "I wouldn't marry John D. junior if he looked like Bushman,

danced like Vern Castle, and sung like C'ruso. Marry my eye—for what should I marry?"

"'Tsa' right," whined Gus the Bus. "All youse girls you're saying like that, and then you going and you get married by some feller what he ain' got no chob, no looks, no afterwards and no class. The way that feller he looks on you I bet you he wants marry by you."

"O' course he does, silly," sang Evelyn. "He wants to. But he ain' goin' to. Where'd you get that idea?"

Gus looked and she was blushing vigorously. He started to say something, then he gave it up, turned and walked away.

The dinner service was almost over. In half an hour or so Evelyn would be "off." Gus was provoked with her, but he had planned to be lenient this time and offer to take her home. He was not at all convinced that her relations with the Chesterfieldian stranger were as platonic as she had so hard tried to "put over." But he wanted to give her the benefit of the last shred of doubt, when——

As Gus turned he saw the nifty party enter, alone, check his things, and cross to a table in a far corner,

in Gus's section, and sit down. Shorty scampered over and took an order. It was evidently a "stall." The man ordered a cup of coffee and a cigar. He had not come to dine. Gus got it in a flash—he had come to wait. To wait for whom? Too easy.

Gus, in the execution of his duties, shambled over with an ash tray, a finger bowl, and a service of one spoon. The man looked up, beckoned Gus closer, reached into his case and took out a card, wrote a line on it and held it toward Gus, together with a 25-cent piece.

"Take this back to the checker—to Miss Evelyn," he said.

Gus would have torn it up and thrown it into the enemy's face. But business is business, and even a bus knows that. So he took the card, pocketed the silver, and started toward Evelyn.

Let it be said of Gus, who had been reared by a good mother, that he made no effort to read the card.

With leaden heart and hanging head he took it to the throne, placed it before his queen, and stood awaiting orders. Evelyn gasped a bit when she saw the name on the card. She read what was on the other side. She bit her lip for a moment.

"Is a answer?" Gus inquired, as though he did not know what was at stake.

Evelyn bit hard. Her lips opened.

"N-no," she said.

Gus turned away. He didn't attempt to understand what that signified. But no answer was better than "yes" to whatever the proposition might have been. And he took a grain of comfort therefrom.

A moment later Evelyn whispered to Shorty and gave him a hastily scribbled note to take to the lone guest in the corner. Shorty was not as fine as Gus. He opened it surreptitiously and read:

At the drug store on the corner in ten minutes. But, for my sake, don't ever give that red-headed boy any more notes for me. Ev.

Ten minutes later Gus saw Evelyn hurry forth and step into a dainty little car standing before the corner drug store. With her was the dude Iago.

"I'm wish I had a Oo-boat to put it under that audo," mused Gus. "But, chee—it might hurt Efflyn, too. No—I'm hope they have a goot time," and he almost choked as he said it.

XXXIX

GUS THE BUS LENDS EAR TO WAR'S CALL

STEELS ACHING HEART

FAIR CHECKER PILES ON FINAL STRAW

GUS THE BUS, gazing in mortified stupor at the picture of Evelyn the Exquisite Checker whirling away with the too well-dressed rival whose note she had so discreetly answered via Shorty, made a resolve.

He would settle his small affairs, resign and take ship for the fatherland to fight for the kaiser—if he had to cross in a U-boat! Romance and history were full of precedent for it. Heroes of all the ages had sought the clash and crash of war to drown the agonizing echo of an unfavourable answer from the eyes of the Only One.

He squared his slim shoulders, faced about in military fashion, and marched in methodical and regular strides toward his transport—the night car.

Every rumble of the wheels was to him an advance

roar of cannon; every jar was to him the lurch of the musket's "kick back"; each noise about him was the babe of a giant battle turmoil newly born.

How small everything that had seemed big now was.

His heart steeled, his mind determined, the petty incidents of the humdrum life of many months just past seemed far away. Evelyn appeared as a memory of long ago, dim and eerie. He approached his boarding-house—it looked tawdry and seemed temporary—a soldier's stopping place on the way, a bivouac until sunrise should bring the clatter and the earnest work of warfare.

In bed a thousand emotions rushed over him. He tingled with the rushing fervour of the new, mad game. He was the son of soldiers and the brother of soldiers. And he, too, was a soldier, an Uhlan fighting, if need be dying, for his emperor and the honour of his native land. It was most inspiring. He could not sleep with it.

Deep in the night his eyes closed, and he went into a jagged, restless sort of coma which resembled sleep but lacked its quietude. He awoke with a jump. He felt for the sword at his side, but his hand closed only on the boarding-house cat, which of

late had made a haven of the good-natured busboy's couch.

The cat spat and shot away. Gus shot up to a sitting posture. He rubbed his burning eyes and looked about him at the familiar but now strange surroundings of his home.

Gus dressed and made his way to the café, entered as usual, and donned the regimentals not of a trooper of the legion, but of a bus of the rear region. It was to be the last time, probably. He would give his notice, decent notice, as became his post of cabinet officer in the organization and head bus; then he would leave at once for the front, trusting to the fortunes of the brave and the force of powerful purpose to land him with his fighting brethren where the allied enemy stormed.

With these thoughts predominating, he advanced in good order toward the dining room. His eyes, the eyes of a good soldier, were to the front. His head was up and his hands were at his sides.

But from aloft came a silvery note. It was not the bugle call, nor was it the electrifying whistle of the enemy's dum-dum as it splits the air above the intrenched hero's head.

"Oh, you blunderbus," it warbled.

And Gus the Warrior halted and left-faced.

Behind a breastwork of checking desk sat the army that had so often defeated him yet given him courage to fight on—Evelyn the Exquisite.

"Give a party a tumble, can't you?" attacked Evelyn. "You're actin' like your ol' friends ain' good enough for you no more."

"I ain't got no friends," said Gus.

"Well—who's been feedin' you a stomick-ache? What's got our cute li'l bus's goat? Or did you fall into money?"

"I'm fall, aw right," said Gus, as bitterly as he could talk in his proud and heroic frame of mind. "But not in no money. I'm fall so hard it knocks me in my head a few sense. After to-night you don't make no more out of me a monkey. I'm go 'way."

"C'm here, Gus. Let's get this right."

The German army made the distance right to the walls of the fort.

"What's in your craw?"

"How you ask me like that?" demanded Gus. "Comes here that loafer what he looks like a pickcher from a clothes-store advertising, he sends by you a letter, he waits till you are getting by the outside, he

sits in his odormobile, you're sneaking aroun', laughing by him, going in by him, riding away mit him; I'm standing there—you are leaving me flattish. Now you ask what is mit me I'm sore! That's what is mit me I'm sore. You are throwing me down for that dude feller. That's what."

"Oh, bee-haive! It's gettin' so I can't look crost-eyed at a guy excep' you, and not have to do a song an' dance next day. Is they any reason why I can't go ridin' with a gen'lman?"

"It's no reason," admitted Gus.

"Then you listen to reason. You're gettin' to be a pest with your jealous plays all the time. Now, I been pretty nice to you. I picked you outta all the busses an' others around here becus you seemed to be a little diff'rent; you acted like you had a mother oncet and knew how to take a joke. And I'm still willin' to string along with you. But if you're gonna make me give you a explanation in writin' ev'ry time I bat an eye or turn a wheel, I'm gonna have to scratch your acquaintance."

"I'm go 'way," said Gus. "So you don' need bother. I'm go by the army to fighting."

"Wake up," said Evelyn. "You're gonna go right on bussin'. And you might as well quit shootin'

yourself them phoney dreams. I'll meet you after the service hour and you and I'll take a li'l walk and talk this here over. Now go on and attend to your water and your butter—Shorty's making queer eyes at you."

Gus proceeded.

"We'll take a li'l walk and I'll kid him into havin' a grain o' human intelligence," said Evelyn to herself, as though she had an unruly child to handle and would attend to it with what patience and indulgence she could muster.

But when Evelyn's work was over she looked about expectantly and found none waiting.

"Oh, Gu-hus!" she called.

But no Gus responded.

XL

GUS THE BUS OFF FOR THE TRENCHES

EVELYN'S AWAKENING

BLUNDERBUS'S THREAT NO IDLE BLUFF

EVELYN the Exquisite Checker was more than a bit miffed when Gus the Bus failed to respond to her yu-hooing. She had let it out to him that he might take her home. Theretofore he had always brightened up and hopped at the suggestion; but this time, no Gus.

Alone and just a little disappointed, the creamy charmer put on her gloves and went home en solitaire.

She turned over in her mind what Gus had threatened, that he was going away to join the kaiser's army. For a moment the thought was a real dread—what if Gus really had gone?

But, no. It was quite incredible. The boy worshipped her and would not leave; at least, he would not go without trying for a farewell kiss. And,

all in all, it didn't seem plausible that he would leave his American ambitions as well as his American love behind him and make an effort to get to Germany, through enemy lines, to embrace the hardships and the dangers of warfare.

So Evelyn put it down as a peeve on Gus's part, determined to slap him gently on the wrist for it next day, and thereafter treat him just a trifle more kindly, because he really was a faithful old soul, and, while his love was pretty hopeless, nevertheless he deserved consideration for it

Next day Evelyn looked about for Gus. But she saw none of him. Instead, she saw Yousouff, the Egyptian busboy of malodorous complexion, acting as a bead-eyed and cowering satellite to Shorty the Waiter. She summoned him with an imperial gesture.

"Where's Gus?" she demanded.

Yousouff smiled an oriental smile that was meant to be cagey but turned out only to be weird.

"Gus he don'ts," said he.

"He what?"

"Ain' no. It's Gus is blowed."

"Hey," said Evelyn. "Don't you try to talk

United States, you 'Gypshun Guinea. Where's Gus?"

"Quits. No here. Went him away."

"Get out o' here," snapped Evelyn.

It didn't take her long to find out that Gus had resigned, had drawn what little pay he had coming, and had left—vamped—vamoosed—beat it!

She was dumfounded. So—he had really meant it. And she had driven him to it.

A great rush of regret welled up in her breast. She shut her eyes and saw Gus as she last had seen him, heart-twinged, dejected, determined. And she realized that she would miss him—missed him already, for he had been to her a cheer and a comfort and a perennial laugh; and he had been a fine influence in her life, for he was as clean and sweet as he was stupid and simple, and as willing and devoted as he had been amiable and patient.

And now—Gus was gone.

Just then the checkroom boy entered and laid a letter on her table. She knew its handwriting. With stuttering fingers she opened the envelope and read:

DEAR MISSUS EFFLYN:

Am I going on train now to Nev York I should get a boats to Germany. I stay there maybe a day

maybe a few days till finds I a boat. Please send my moneys what you gots in my bank by me Cheneral Livery in the postoffice in Nev York. I need him I should pay my passach.

I'm leave in a hurry becaus it ain' no use I staying longer.

Anyway, I'm got from my mother a letter says my kaiser he's need me.

So good-bye and so long. I'm write you maybe from them trenges. I hope you my goodest wishes you should be heppy mit that dude what he takes you in the odormobile.

Trulich yours. GUS.

The letter inclosed was in German, written in close script. Evelyn had a German waiter translate it for her. It said:

MY DEAR SON GUSTAV:

The war has now been raging for more than two years. One after another the kaiser has called Deutschland's sons to the colours. Your father and your brother gave their lives in the first year. All your other brothers, except the baby, and all your uncles and cousins are fighting nobly—may God preserve them. Your cousin Heinrich was killed at Verdun last month. He died like a hero.

No one will ever know what it costs me to write this—but as a German mother, I want you to come home and do your part for your country. Your country comes first, my dear child. And, when this great, terrible slaughter is over, let us at least have

the consolation that we, to the last of us, gave what we could to the glory of the kaiser and our native land.

With kisses and with tears,
Your faithful, adoring

MAMA.

The letter fell from Evelyn's hand. To the cheeks usually so pink with glowing health and youth and peace there came a pallid whiteness. The corners of her mouth drew downward. She felt a strange tickling in her windpipe.

And Yousouff, the Egyptian busboy, standing shiftily by with a dish of chutney to be "O. K.'d" through, while he held an oyster cocktail hidden under his monkey jacket, had to wait and wait and cough twice before the checker looked up; and when she did there were streaks that had run through the powder, and her nose was shiny and reddish, and she was gulping hard.

She looked up dizzily through her tear-wet eyes.

"Gus is gone," she wailed.

"These chutney——"

"All right," said Evelyn. "An' kick in 30 cents for that oyster cocktail or I'll crown you with this water-tumbler. Gee—this here is gonna be a lonely joint without Gus the Bus."

XLI

GUS THE BUS BACK, SOILED AND "BROKE"

MUSTERS SELF OUT

FINDS HOME, AND FOUND BY NEW LOVE

GUS THE BUS is back.

He arrived yesterday on the blind end of a baggage car, having "beat" his way from New York, discouraged and worn out in his effort to cross the ocean to Germany, where he planned to enlist in the kaiser's army.

Covered with soot and cinders, his clothes threadbare and soiled and torn, half-starved, half-frozen, racked with hanging for hours onto the shaky and uncertain bars of a box car, he dropped off the train as it entered the city limits, and walked into town.

Penniless and worn, he made his way to the boarding-house. The kindly lady who runs it, and whose star lodger Gus so long had been, welcomed him with the first sympathetic word he had heard in weeks.

She rushed him an impromptu platter of ham and eggs, sent him upstairs to wash and make his appearance at least human, and fussed and cackled over him like the mother of the prodigal son.

Gus told her some of his experiences. He had been rebuffed by the captain of the *Deutschland.* He had failed to raise money from his compatriots in New York. And, had he gotten money, he found no way by which he could have reached Germany. Every entrance, he learned, was closed by hostile troops and hostile navies.

He had "stood pat" as long as he could. But, with nothing on hand and nothing ahead, he had begun to think of what he had left behind. He felt that he had done his best. His flight had been sincere. His effort had been honest. But he had failed.

The landlady approved highly and heartily of everything he had done. Gus had always had her sympathy and her friendliest emotions. She had seen him day after day, living his simple, clean, childlike life, going steadily to his work, worshipping a forlorn love, dreaming vain dreams, always cheerful to others, always courageous for himself.

The landlady was a widow. She might have been

around forty-five. Her husband had died ten years ago and left her enough insurance to furnish a boarding-house. She had prospered and had a neat little lump in the neighbourhood savings bank.

She had never discussed postscript matrimony with herself; she had been too busy, in truth, to contemplate it.

When Gus had gone away and she had begun to miss him at his breakfasts, miss his ruddy, soapy cheeks and his naïve and genial manner, she harboured a pang.

"Mine gootness—am I in love?" she asked herself.

For a moment she held the thought; then she exploded into a laugh. No, it wasn't love. It was foster-motherhood, maybe.

She felt her heart pounding and bounding with his return. He was her pet—her human, prodigal pet. Even now that he appeared as though he had just come out of an ash barrel, he was still welcome.

Only one reservation crept into the soul of Mrs. Heinemann. She resented Evelyn in his life's affairs. She was jealous as mothers sometimes are jealous of the girls their growing sons court.

It was inconceivable to the wholesome, simple woman that this Americanized blonde had not wil-

fully led the wide-eyed lad on to cut capers for her amusement, to make a one-man holiday to pass her heartless time away.

She feared that he would choose to remain a busboy for life if that would keep him near "that woman." Knowing that he was penniless, she had hoped he would let her advance him enough so that he could look about, find some promising occupation, start toward somewhere.

"You ain't going back to that rest'rent, are you?" she asked, with a bit of a quaver in her throat.

Gus looked up. The question had not caught him unprepared. He had given it deep hours of struggling thought. He had left Evelyn the Exquisite Checker and his place of employment as the result of no sudden whim. He had sounded to the depths every ramification of his futile love, his hopeless commercial situation, the get-nowhere probabilities of the whole affair from every standpoint.

But he had peered, also, into his own soul, and faced it without reserve.

There was no denying it to himself—Evelyn meant more to him than the rest of the world put together, than his future, than anything except his honour. He would not have come back to her had

he been able to get to Germany. Once his mind had been made up to fight for his birthland, he had put aside his romance in all sincerity and final determination. But that great incentive closed to him, he found that his spirit was weeping for another sight of those twinkling blue eyes, those arched red lips, those plump pink cheeks, that hair of undulating threads of gold.

He looked up into the landlady's face at her question.

"Y-yes; I'm go back," he said.

Gus, sans carfare, walked downtown.

He felt himself trembling as he neared the employees' entrance to the café. He met no one in the alley. The help was all at work, for the noonday meal was in full cry.

He opened the back door nervously but quietly, entered the familiar passage, fumblingly took off his hat, and advanced. He saw Shorty the Waiter just leaving Evelyn's throne, having been checked through with a trayful of food and drinks. Her head was down, peering at some figures. Gus got as far as her desk and stood, kicking one heel with the other toe. Evelyn suddenly looked up.

She gasped, she swallowed, she rubbed her eyes, she started to reach forward, she fell back, she straightened.

"Well, of all the—Gus!"

"Y— you're glad to seeing me?" he asked with tremorous lips.

"Glad? I'm so glad I could knock your block off f'r goin' away."

XLII

GUS THE BUS BACK ON THE OLD JOB

FULL OF PEP

EVELYN THROWS HIM DOWN; BUT THEN—

GUS THE BUS got his old job back. Evelyn the Exquisite Checker left him standing at her desk while she slipped out and buzzed into the ear of her friend, the boss. He smiled, chuckled a bit, then winked and nodded.

"Back he goes," said he. "And I'm glad to get him again. I haven't had a good laugh since he went away."

"Put on your regalia an' pick up a tray—you're workin," said Evelyn, beaming.

"T'anks," said Gus. "I'm find out in the last couple weeks it's lots things what they're worser than bussing."

"You said a lungful," agreed Evelyn. "Now if you'll behave an' not go prancin' off on bughouse trips after nothin', an' pay attention to business,

you'll be all right again. Forw'd, march—to the kitchen for yours."

Five minutes later Gus was in status quo, the monkey-jacketed, interfering, dough-faced water-witch, modern prototype of Hebe, only not so much so.

His absence had brought him back with renewed and revitalized energy. His fumbling feet flew. He balanced on his right palm with debonair rakishness the heaped trayful of dinner salvage; he anticipated the every command of Shorty the Waiter, his chief.

And Evelyn, relieved of her worries over the boy, glad to see him back sane and sound, tossed him a saccharine smile every time he whizzed by on his flat feet.

But through it all Gus was not entirely lost in the activity of the job. He had a gnawing doubt below.

Would Evelyn invite him to escort her home after work?

Would she, realizing that her philandering had driven him afar amid dangers and desperate deeds, understand that he was entitled to unusual consideration now that he had come back? Would she let

herself out to make him glad he had returned? Would she?

She gave no hint one way or the other.

To the last five minutes of the working hours Gus waited and looked for his answer.

Then he put on his overcoat and his seedy citizen's clothes—and got it.

As he turned back to her desk his eyes blinked. Her light was shut off, her affairs for the day had evidently been closed and she—she had gone!

Gus stood, stunned. She hadn't even thought to say good-night.

She had gotten him back his job—oh, yes; in pity, probably.

She had smiled on him—of course; wasn't he laughable?

But his homecoming had touched no hidden spring, had unhooked no long-repressed emotion.

Gus stood there, thinking, blinking.

He was not stung. It was not the sharp, pointed sorrow that pricked him. It was a cold, blunt touch from behind—one chilled with contempt, not burning with cruelty.

Why?

He knew that he was no Lochinvar to sweep off

her feet a well-balanced, self-satisfied, sure-footed entity like Evelyn. But their relations had been close, and, in a measure, mismated as the principals were for each other, romantic.

Evelyn was not unconscious of the fact that he adored her. There was no call in that on her to yield to him what was too absurd to contemplate. But she must at least realize that it obligated her to treat him with crumbs of courtesy lest her plain rudeness be cruelty. Not alone loving imposes its fee; being loved, even ex parte, binds one to many obvious, if sometimes odious, duties.

So she had plainly, brusquely, patently "left him flat." She could not have forgotten. She had aimed it deliberately to wound him—to show him his place and to convince him now for all time that he must go about his business and not presume to expect unusual favours.

Very well. It had hurt before. It hurt worse now. But he would stand it and stand for it. There was no other way.

His thoughts turned to Mrs. Heinemann, his boarding-house landlady. She was stout and past the flavour of youth. But she was not temperamental. And she always had a welcome for him.

He would go home—indeed, by her attitude toward him Mrs. Heinemann was making the place a home. There he could lounge in her easy chair and she would come and make a fuss over him. She would play the Gus and he would do the haughty Evelyn. It would be only retribution. For what the exquisite checker had made him suffer he would teach Mrs. Heinemann how to take a joke. She had shown him that he was not grotesque; that he was not impossible. He would take her word for it. He would do the high and mighty a bit, himself.

But was it fair? He knew full well what it meant to smile with lighted eyes and get back a faint, colourless, meaningless smirk of indifference. He knew how that smarted and burned. Could he play that game with his own wounds from its own bitterness unhealed?

No. He would go home. But he would tell Mrs. Heinemann honestly that she was making an ass of herself. He would be frank with her. He would not let her hope and pant and strain, like he had done with Evelyn, only to have her find out at perhaps the moment of her brightest hope that she had been ridiculous all the while.

His victory would be a Christian and a manly

one. He would save her the hurt that he himself was enduring.

And with this purpose firmly set he swung through the employees' door and started cat-a-corner for his car, when out of the shadow of the drug-store pillar toward him came a figure—a plump, active, eye-compelling figure—and Evelyn the Exquisite Checker put her little gloved hand on his arm.

"Where you been?" she asked in her silverest tones. "I've been waitin' here, half froze, for you, Will you take me home? I wisht you would, Gussie."

Would he? You just bet your eye he did.

XLIII

GUS THE BUS HANDED HIS PASSPORTS

BY EVELYN

INTERNATIONAL CRISIS REACHES CLIMAX

"WELL," said Gus the Bus, "at last! Now America and Chermany is fighting——"

"Whoa!" cried Evelyn the Exquisite Checker. "You made a false start before the gun went off. There ain' no fightin' yet. I agree with you it begins to look a little like a shindig. But jus' now——"

"Say—I bet you the kaiser he'll send out and blow up a ships with a soup toureen——"

"You mean a submarine."

"I mean a boats what she goes down in the basement from the ocean; that's what I mean. I bet you the kaiser he sends one of them and he blows up a ship. Then comes right away swell fightings."

"You'd think it wasn' so swell if you had to do it," said she.

"If I had to do it? If I don't do it, who does it then? You bet you my life I do it. Didn' I once before start already I should fight for the kaiser?"

"What!" shrieked the bewitching one, half rising from her high stool and leaning hotly over the checking counter. "You mean you'd go an' fight for Germany?"

Gus looked puzzled.

"For who then I fight?" he asked.

Evelyn dropped from her stool, walked around the desk and leaned over the rail, her right arm pointing straight out, the index finger of its hand taking a bead on Gus's nose.

"You get out o' here," she cried.

Gus flushed, paled, stood rigid, began to move and mumble without getting anywhere or saying anything. His eyes asked her to explain.

"You vamp before I start this here war by beltin' you with this here ink bottle," she commanded vehemently. "So—you're gonna fight for the kaiser, eh? On your way!"

Gus heaved his slight shoulders, started toward the kitchen, turned back, headed for the dining room.

At the threshold of the swinging door he turned and coughed and started.

"I——"

Evelyn reached for something to throw. Gus shot through the yielding door and it shut behind him.

Bewildered and staggered, Gus leaned against a pillar and pondered. He gulped hard on his Adam's apple. His fingers opened and closed. He was fighting the great fight—the combat that many a hero has had to settle—the conflict between love of country and love of woman.

His jaw hung low. His eyes were down upon the tiled floor. He shuffled his ungainly feet slightly now and then, just enough to make a scrapy sound that would have sent shivers up your back and that gave him renewed force to battle on—shots of energy.

Once he was about to start back toward the checking desk. But he pulled himself together and again leaned back his lean back against the flat of the square post and mechanically biffed the angles of his elbows against it to stir his blood.

The break had come!

Now he must either renounce his campaign of

strafing the allies or he must yield. It is hard for a German to yield.

Her words clanged in his ears. How rudely, how unequivocally she had dismissed him. She had made no allowances for their pleasant relations of the past, for the treaties of old, for the many notes of amity and affection that had been exchanged between them by word, by look, by letter.

This was war. And war is hell—that part that isn't even paved with good intentions.

Gus wavered, hesitated, let out his right foot, followed it by his left, and was swinging and sliding with determined purpose to the swinging portal. He placed his palm against it, opened it just enough to let in his face and his right hand. Evelyn looked. In the right hand was waving the busboy's towel—a flag of truce.

"All right," she announced. "I'll stand by the rules o' civilized internash'nal riots. Advance under flag o' truce an' pull your spiel."

Gus came to the desk, snapped his heels together, looked into the face of the foe, and said:

"Missus Efflyn, I'm changed mine mind. I fight for America."

"Hooray!" sang out Evelyn, as she applauded. "Welcome to the army o' the free an' the brave, what can lick the stuffin' outta any other nation on earth or all the other nations put together. On behalf o' the power vested in me as sec'etary o' the Workin' Women's Defense League, I accept your offer o' services to the Stars an' Stripes."

Gus beamed.

"You take me back—huh?"

"Take you back? Where'd you get that 'take you?' I didn't know I had you in the firs' place."

"Oh, yes. It's all for you. Only for you I'm fight against the kaiser."

"Well, what do you want me to do? Slay a ox an' put on a feast o' rejoicin'? Or would our li'l hero p'fer a parade t'rough the loop while the fact'ry whistles blows an' all work is suspended for five minutes?"

"No," said Gus. "But when a soljer he comes over by the other side it's alwus goes with a tseremony. The cheneral from the other side every time kisses the new rookroot."

"Oh, I see. Well, advance, p'tector o' my country, and receive your reward."

And Gus got an osculatory smack on the cheek that

made his blood tingle, and in his head rang glorious strains of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Blushingly he withdrew a pace and, in grateful acknowledgment, piped:

"Ooh—it's nice to be a soljer for America."

XLIV

GUS THE BUS FLIES STARS AND STRIPES

EXIT THE HYPHEN

EVELYN TELLS OF LINCOLN'S GREATNESS

GUS THE BUS, enshrined in the good graces of Evelyn the Exquisite Checker since his declaration of patriotic allegiance to the United States, entered for the day, radiant and even a bit cocky.

Across his features was spread a benign and bland grin. And from his left lapel there flew a tiny American flag.

"Atta boy," she greeted him. "The Star-Spangled Banner in glory still waves."

"In glory you're right," chuckled Gus. "Any time she's flying in the buttonhole from a Cherman, she's in glory. I ain't got it no more in me a hyphalootin—nix on the Cherman-American; I'm now a regler patriotic, don't you?"

"Spoken like a true son of Uncle Sam!"

"What he adopts him from a Cherman orphan asylum. Anyway, if I'm his son, why he's my uncle?"

"That'll be all o' that. A patriot shouldn't ask no questions. Whatever sounds grand an' glorious, that's what he is, if it stands to reason or if it don't. At a time like this——"

"What kind of a time it is? It's don't look like war no more."

"Well? Can't a guy be a patriot excep' when they's war in sight? How about Abe Lincoln's birthday? Ain't that enough?"

"That Linken, he must be a great man," said Gus reflectively.

"Great? Did you say great? Say—they wasn't never no two nations put together what had a man as great as Abe Lincoln. He freed the slaves, an' he said nobody couldn' fool all the boobs all the time. When you're talkin' about him you're talkin' about somebody."

"Him oncet was a wood-chopper, didn't it?"

"Sure. He was a poor boy. He turned out on a farm an' he split kindlin' an' studied 'Pilgrim Progress' out of a book at the same time by the light of a bum pine torch. Then he got to be a lawyer."

"Didn't they use to call him 'Honest Abe'?"

"Yeh. But lawyers was diff'rent them days. Anyway, he was diff'rent. They was a guy named Steve Douglas—not the party that makes them three an' a half dollar shoes—this was a little guy with a big gift o' gab. Well, Lincoln challenged Douglas to debate about slaves."

"For how much?"

"This here wasn' for money—it was for somethin' bigger—for youmanity. Well, they travels all over Illinois an' they scraps an' calls each other a lot o' names."

"How did it come out?"

"How could it come out? Wherever they goes to it everybody says Abe Lincoln made Douglas look like a deaf an' dumb guy half asleep. The hull country sat up an' paid attention. So they up an' elects Abe President. An' he goes to Washin'ton an' he writes a pardon for all the slaves an' slips a couple o' amendments in the Cons'itootion. An' if you don't think them was a couple o' amendments, you jus' take a walk t'rough the black belt an' get fresh with somebody—that's all."

"Him starts the uncivil war, too, wasn't he?"

"No. He didn' start no war. He was always for

peace. But when them hot-headed southern fellers lets loose on Fort Sumter, Abe he stiffs up his long back an' he says: 'So that's their li'l game, is it? Call out the army!' Well, in a week brothers was fightin' again brothers, and Abe was teachin' them Masons an' them Dixons how to take a joke. 'Youse wants slaves, huh?' says he. 'Well, nothin' doin'—this here nation can't get by half slave an' half free. An' youse of got to lick every man, woman, and child north o' Louisville before Simon Legree drags 'Liza back over that there ice, see?"

"Oh—he must of be a brafe man!" exclaimed the bus.

"Brave? Did you say brave? Get this f'm me—in Lincoln's time they knew how to be brave. They wasn' no pass-a-fist howlers in them dark days. When Abe says 'Fight' they lef' the plow in the alley an' didn' hardly stop to kiss their neighbour's wife good-bye—they was on their way.

"An' the Southern League wasn' no Class B outfit neither. Them lads give us a arg'ment what made us step, an' don't you forget it."

"I won't."

"Yes, sir. That there Bull Run wasn' no movin' pickcher rehearsal. An' when that there *Merrimac*

starts cruisin' up an' down aroun' Newport News they wasn' no notes wrote. War was doggone rough them days. We had to get up the *Monitor* an' go out an' straf the southern delegation. An' we didn' have 'em licked good till Gettysburg—that was what broke the back o' the solid South. An' Lincoln went over there an' he made up a speech about it what went back three-score-an'-seven years, an' he looked at the graves of the dead soldiers an' he said that this here nation of the people, for the people, an' by the people was a old-established concern an' wasn' goin' out o' bizness because of any rumpus in the board o' directors.

"An' he was dead right, too. After a while Lee saw he couldn' do nothin' with Molasses S. Grant, an' he surrenders at Apoplexy Court House an' the war is over.

"Then come the reconstruction, when the lion was layin' down with the lamb an' the licked southerners admitted we was all brothers. After that we had coloured help in the Pullmans an' in the barber shops, an' we rose to our present state of enlightened an' peaceful civilization what is the envy o' the whole world—that an' our munition fact'ries."

"An' did Abe Linken he done all that?"

"Well, most of it. Anyway, we wasn' never able to find nobody what could fill his boots entirely. When it comes to arguin' an' makin' speeches, we're pretty well off, even now. But when it comes to sendin' out *Monitors* an' writin' a few new amendments to the Constitootion an' lickin' anybody what don't share our idees of humanity, we kind o' miss Abe."

"Well—I'm growing up," said Gus, trying to cheer her as far as possible.

XLV

GUS THE BUS STRONG FOR ABE LINCOLN

BETWEEN BIRTHDAYS

EVELYN STANDS BY GEORGE WASHINGTON

I'M SEE where comes now Vashingdon's gebirthday right away after Linken's gebirthday," said Gus the Bus.

"Sure. It breaks like that every year," said the exquisite checker. If Feb'ry wasn't such a short month maybe Grant an' Bryan an' Jess Willard might 'a' been born in it, too."

"This here Vashingdon him was a great feller," said Gus. "But I guess him wasn't such a great like Linken, he was, huh?"

"Behave," said she. "Washington was the greatest man what ever lived. Anybody knows that."

"I couldn't believe it. Did you seen them pickchers from Linken? Well, if you see again you see he used to tie his necktie chust like I'm tie mine—you

know, kind o' not so exactly. That shows he was great."

"You're beany. Look at Washington Street—right downtown, an' Lincoln Street, 'way out on the West Side. That proves it. An' the City o' Washington, our great capital, while the City o' Lincoln is in the Nebraska-Iowa-Colorado League. That shows you."

"Yes, but Linken Park he's chust so bigger than Vashingdon Park, don't you?"

"Come out of it. Washington freed white men an' Lincoln only freed smokes. If it wasn't for Washington we'd all be English."

"Who? Me? I'd be English?"

"You? You'd be over in Hedgewisch-Holstein, where you turned out."

"No, sir. Nobody couldn't make me no English, not Vashingdon oder somebody else."

"Make you English? They couldn' even learn you English. I s'pose you think Bismarck or Hans Wagner was the greates' man in hist'ry. But I tell you Washington invented the Stars an' Stripes an' licked the English out o' their socks, which is more than what Germany can do—what do you know about that?"

"I bet you Chermany licks England if she don't have Frantz and Rusha in partners. She licks them all, anyhow."

"Cut out that hyphen-stuff. I thought you was with us."

"Sure I'm with you. But right away you say from Chermany nasty things. Anyway, Linken wasn' Cherman—for what you're knocking him?"

"I ain' knockin' Lincoln. Only I says Washington was the greates' party what ever lived, an' I can prove it:

"Washington was the father of his country. Lincoln wasn' only the father of a sleepin' car boss. Washington didn' never tell a lie. Washington wrote the Declaration o' Independence, which begins 'Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid o' their party.' Did Lincoln do any o' them things?"

"Linken got killed, an' that was more than what Vashingdon he done."

"Well, Washington didn' go to no theayters, so how could he get killed? He was too busy sittin' home writin' declarations. When he finished up bein' President he says good-bye to his soldiers an' he goes home to his wife, the mother of her country, an'

he retires f'm fast comp'n'y an' gives Adams a chance. An' he never tried to come back, neither, like some o' the has-been Presidents now'days. I ain' mentionin' no names nor nothin', but things is changed since Washington went home to Martha."

"Well, Linken couldn't help it becus he got shot. If he didn' got shot maybe he retires, too, an' stays home an' laughs how the other feller tries to run the job. Vashingdon he never chopped rails, I bet you, an' he never made no speeches, by Getaspurg, like the one what begins 'Four sore an' several years ago——' Maybe Vashingdon he writes the decoration from interference; but Linken he proves it. An' Linken, I'm think so, writes yet the Monroe Doctrine, too."

"Whoa. Lincoln didn' write no Monroe Doctrine —Jefferson wrote it. Jefferson was a frien' o' Washington. Washington prob'ly helped him on it. In them days nobody didn' do nothin' without Washington helped them. He was first in war, first in peace, an' first in anything what come off."

"Well, Linken was first when the votes was counted, anyhow. And he was a lawyer. Vashingdon he wasn' no lawyer."

"I should say not. Washington was a soldier. He went out an' fought Indians, he didn' pull no

law on 'em; Washington went out an' give the British a good trimmin', he didn' sue 'em or have 'em arrested. They wasn' no lawyer in Washington. Didn' I tell you he never told a lie?"

"Well, he hacks down his father's olive tree."

"Cherry tree—where'd you get that olive tree?"

"Oh, excuse me—I was thinking of a martini when it should 'a' be a Manhattan."

XLVI

GUS THE BUS CROSSES THE RUBICON

AT BREAKFAST

MRS. HEINEMANN LEARNS WHO'S WHAT

"THAT blondish womans what she was here by you when you was sick from falling on your head," said Mrs. Heinemann, the love-torn and corpulent boarding-house mistress, "you like her a lots?"

Gus the Bus blushed crimson and bent his eyes keenly and with equivocal preoccupation on the sizzling bacon and the simmering eggs on the plate before him.

"She ain't so terrible swell. She's got a puck nose and I'm bet you that her hairs ain't blond like that from nacher. It don't give no hairs them colour without she puts medicine on. You can fool men, but you couldn't fool a woman.

"And did you see her mouth? Say—she smears on her lips paint what you could interior decorate

mit it a bedroom—that much. And on her face was roudge doused mit enough powder to kill off all the cockroaches in a orphan asylum. And on her eyebrows she's got it shiny stuff like what I polish glassesware.

"What is she for a kind feemel, anyways?"

Gus lifted his eyes slowly, and there was in them a glint of wounded indignation.

"Better you don' knock too much her," he iterated, slowly and with cold vehemence. "She's a such lady what it ain't for you nor me we should lock too closet or pass no rotten remarks."

"Oh, I don' know," said Mrs. Heinemann. "She's the kween from somewheres or something? Huh? Why I shouldn't say what I seen? Is she better than what somebody else is, or I'm worser? It's a free country, and I guess a lady could talk about a woman if she's feel like it."

"I couldn' stop you," admitted Gus. "But if you wanna be mit me friends you cut it out."

"I don' like I should make you feel bad," yielded the landlady. "But I think so you should know it what is she. A woman's intztinct is the surest informations. And you can believe or not when

I'm tell you, but that dame she ain' no good for you."

"Stop!" cried Gus. "She's ain' no dame. I didn' think from you I would hear such swearing langwich, and on a fine lady yet, too. She's got a high position in the café—she's the checker. And she's got a high ejucation, too. And she's got more gold in her teeth alone that what your hull cheap boarding-house it's worth."

Mrs. Heinemann fell back limply. This from Gus, the mild and amiable Gus, was a many-fold attack.

To begin with, it revealed to her a depth of passion on his part that she would not have suspected could burn within him. And it worked on a trigger pulled by that peroxided stranger. And Gus was crying aloud his shame, and defying and bully-ragging her—his landlady and outspoken wooer—for the absent but mighty blonde.

Gus sat rigid, looking arrows at her.

Mrs. Heinemann's head toppled down till her chin jarred against her chest and she began to sob.

Gus, the soft-hearted, relaxed his anger for a flash. He hated to see any one weep. And Mrs. Heinemann, outside the times she had rushed him

with her unwelcome and unrequited courtship, had been a sweet and motherly soul, and he grieved to see her unhappy.

"D-on't cry," he ventured.

"Why shouldn't I cry?" she blubbered back. "F'irst you sit here by mine table and you rave over this here creecher; then you make a insult on me; then you slam yet mine prope'ty, mine first-class boarding-house what anybody could tell you it ain't a better one in the city. Then you ask me I shouldn' cry. If I ain't got it reasons I should cry I hope I don't ever cry again so long I live."

And she let loose a new Niagara of tears and a Herculaneum of gulping sobs.

Gus twitched and writhed and once reached his hand over toward her as though to soothe her, but drew it back again. Mrs. Heinemann cageyly peeked out of the corner of her near eye to see how he was behaving, then tore into a renewed quake and flood.

Gus arose. For a second he rocked unsteadily. Then he pushed back his chair, planted himself firmly on both generous soles, jabbed his right hand down into his low-cut alpaca vest and held forth his left at length in the classic gesture of oratory.

"Mrs. Heinemann," said he.

She swerved and quivered on.

"Again I ask you, Mrs. Heinemann—you pay a little attention by what I'm say," he followed up.

She straightened jerkily and as though in pain, as he stood rigid and waited until her tear-run countenance squarely faced his set and tense visage.

"Mrs. Heinemann," said he, "you better know it now except some other time. This lady what you're making dirty cracks about her, she's a angel.

"I don' wanna I should make you worse unhappich than what I'm see for lots o' weeks you been. You seen fit you should make by me love—all right, I let you so far I could. I'm a kind man, Mrs. Heinemann, and I wouldn't hurt the feelings from a dog if I could help it.

"But now, what you yourself starts something, I ain't see no other way but what I'm got to finish it.

"That blondish checker-lady, what her name is Missus Efflyn, I—now listen me, Mrs. Heinemann; this is gonna be by you a s'prise—I—I luff her."

Mrs. Heinemann collapsed. Strange noises sang in her head. She saw things winging before her eyes.

She grabbed the arms of her chair to keep herself from falling—falling.

When she came to herself she looked dizzily about. But she was alone. She heard the slam of a door —it was the outer one. She ran to the window, drew back the immaculate curtains and saw, hurrying down the block, a shuffle-footed, spare youth, his measly shoulders squared and his eyes forward, inviting and meeting the gaze of the world.

XLVII

GUS THE BUS SKATES ON THE ICY BOSOM À LA SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN

EXQUISITE ONE SEES A FLOATING VISION

SAY, Missus Efflyn," chortled Gus the Bus. "You like maybe I take you by the skating ring?"

"What kind o' skating?"

"Ices skating. Is now awful stylish to go by skating rings. So I'm thought maybe you like it go with me."

"It's been a few years since I cut figger eights on the surfiss o' the frozen drink," said Evelyn, coquettishly, "but I guess I can still shake a foot in the slipp'ry pastime. C'mon."

They had three hours or more between meals. And they started out.

As they waited for the street car Evelyn's dimpled features undulated with smiles that would not stay

under cover. Several times she shook with irrepressible merriment.

"On wat you're laughing?" asked Gus.

"I jus' can't help it," she confessed. "Seein' you stumble over your own feet on the floor an' on the sidewalks, I'm jus' thinkin' how you'll look on ice skates—about like a clam on crutches comin' down the gable of a slick roof. Oh, Gus—I've seen many comedy pickchers in my life, Chaplin an' Fatty an' the rest. But I betchou Gus the Bus on skates is the vision of a lifetime."

"Maybe better you don't laugh so kvick," said Gus, hurt. "Chust because I'm busser it ain' no reason I couldn't skating."

"It ain't because you're lowly an' humble," snickered Evelyn. "They ain' no law what says it takes a duke or a capitalist to glide on runners. But you're so nach'rally web-footed—it's a gift."

"Aw'right," said Gus. "Anyway, I try. It don't hurt anybody I should try."

"Nobody but yourself," said she. "An' I'll do what I can to keep you right side up if I see you skiddin'."

Arrived at the rink, Gus fished out his purse and

paid the admission price. Inside he paid again for rental of two pairs of skates.

An attendant knelt at Evelyn's feet and strapped her tools on. Gus put on his own.

Evelyn, giggling, walked with him gingerly over the planks to the edge of the ice.

"Now, stan' here jus' a minute, an' I'll try the boosom o' the shiny briney," she directed.

And she trod with caution onto the rink and struck out with fair and average technique, scraping over the frozen tank to its centre, then slowly tacking about and making her way by choppy and careful strokes back to where he waited.

"C'mon in—the ice is fine," she called, somewhat mockingly, holding out her hand from where she stood, four feet from the wooden shore.

Gus hobbled to the end of the planks, then—

Something shot by Evelyn—something that sailed like a graceful yacht on the calm ripples of a perfect afternoon, glided past her without effort, without a quiver.

It was Gus the Bus!

Evelyn turned so sharply that she lost her balance and went down. Before she could collect herself the vision veered in a parabolic sweep and Gus was be-

side her. He dug the point of one skate into the ice for purchase, reached down one hand, and drew her easily to her feet.

Evelyn rubbed her eyes—and rubbed herself elsewhere, too.

"Let's try a skating together," said Gus, as he crossed hands with her and steered her out. It was as though she were holding to the prow of a motor-driven ice-boat. She scarcely felt herself skating, yet she was sweeping, swinging, sliding sweetly along.

For five minutes she said not a word. Then she sat down—this time voluntarily—and waited till Gus's ear was within sotto voce range.

"You slipped one over on me," she said, not without a tinge of resentment.

"What I'm do now?" he asked, in alarm.

"How'd I know you was a p'fesh'nal skater?"

"Oh, no, ma'am. Only in Schleswig-Holstein, where I'm geborn, skates all the boys pretty good. Was there lots boys what they're skate better from me—but not by the school where I'm went. In the school I'm win lots prizes effry winter. If you're think I'm a fine skater, you should see mine brother Carl. He's——"

"Never mind your brother Carl. If he skates any better than what you do he belongs in vawdville. What I can't get through my nut is how a party can be as hobble-hoofed as you with a tray on your hand and as magic as what you are with skates on your clodhoppers."

What more she would have said she didn't say right then, for the manager of the rink came over and begged pardon—said the feminine exhibition skater of the place had asked permission to skate with the gentleman—that is, if the lady didn't object, and——

Evelyn rose to her feet.

"Well, you go back an' ease it to that frowsy-frizzed ice-bird that the lady does objec'—see? An' if she keeps makin' any more eyes at—at this—at my gentl'man friend, I'll take off one o' these here cheap skates o' yourn an' wallop her one over the coco. Do I make myself clear, or would you like a impromptyou demonstration?"

The manager bowed low and begged a thousand pardons. He didn't know—he thought it would be all right. But the exhibition skater was a star, and she had been quite fascinated by the wonderful stroke of the gentleman, and she had thought——

"What right's she got to think?" snapped Evelyn. "Anybody what skates as good as her ain' got no right to think. That kind o' skatin' and good sense don' go good together."

And she tossed her head toward Gus, who sighed and began to take off his skates.

XLVIII

GUS THE BUS ENCOUNTERS SPRINGTIME

COMING AND GOING

EVELYN GETS TWO VARIETIES OF MUSH

"ACH, GUSSIE," said Mrs. Heinemann, the mature and matronly landlady of the boarding-house, beaming, as she set a steaming cup of gleaming coffee beside the elbow of Gus the Bus to climax his savoury breakfast, "comes now kvick springtimes. Is already more as half past March. You're know what means it springtimes?"

"Means it a cold in the nose and a lots dust he flies in the eye excep' comes rain it gets you wet like a dog —that's all."

"Oh, no—that ain't all," gurgled Mrs. Heinemann, a croony light radiating from her mild eyes. "Springtimes it means luff and luffers, an'——"

"Love an' loafers?"

"No, no—luffers—mens and womens what's luffing each another. Ask any poeter. It's easier to luff in springtimes what it is any other times."

"Well," said Gus, "maybe it's easier by you; but by me it's chust so hard like in the middle from winter."

And he pushed back his chair, crossed to the rack in the hall, took his hat and his overcoat, said "So long" in an entirely impersonal way, and went forth, either not hearing or not heeding the sigh of longing and of pain that bellowsed from the burdened bosom of Mrs. Heinemann.

Gus rode downtown, entered the restaurant by the employees' alley door, changed to his professional livery and strolled toward the dining room through the regular channel, via the checker's desk. Evelyn was not there.

He passed through the swinging door and saw her ensconced in a far corner, alone, eating a bowl of mush and milk. He approached.

"Mornin', blunderbus," sang the gay and frivolous checker. "I'm eatin' on the joint to-day. The grub out in my abode didn't look very flush to me, so I lef' it as it laid an' come down here to take on fuel."

"Wouldn' you'd like some coffee?" asked Gus.

"Oh, I guess I could stow away a li'l Jav," she twittered. "Go on out like a good kid an' bring me a shot."

Gus returned with the coffee.

"Thanks," said she. "I wouldn' know what to do without you. The rest o' them lazy waiters an' no-good busses give me the go-by becus they know they ain' no tip comin' through. But not my Gus. You bet I don' have to go prowlin' in no kitchen for no junk when my Gus is in the precin't, eh?"

"I shall say it you don't," said Gus. "By me always it's a pledgure I should bring you anything."

"Spoke like out of a book! When you talk like that you're a danj'rous man, Gus. They ain' no woman can resist that kind o' langwidge when it's backed up by them kind o' looks."

"What for kind looks?"

"Like what you gimme when you said that—like a sick sheep, or a dyin' cow—or a lovin' Romeo."

Gus was silent for a moment. Then he rested one hand on the corner of the table and leaned down, over her.

"I ain' no sickish cow," said he, earnestly, "an' what I'm tell you it ain' no bull yet, neither. But when you're say I'm talk an' look like love, you're saying something. If that there it's a sickness, belief me, Missus Efflyn, I'm guess I die f'm it."

"Listen at him," she returned. "Say—I could make you marry me for them words."

"Make me? I'm made a'ready. If you would marry mit me you wouldn't need it to zoo me in no courts. I'd be waiting by the church all the night long."

"That there sugar goes great with this here coffee."

"Oh, I'm know you kit mit me around. I'm know you wouldn't haf me. I'm know that long times ago. But, anyway, I could talk about it—an' have myself dreams about it. It ain' no law against them, does it?"

"Rave on," said the exquisite checker.

"You know what is? You know what is kind o' time now?" he resumed after a gulp.

"Time? It's about a quarter to twelve."

"No, no. I ain't mean f'm the clock. I mean f'm the year. You know when it is now?"

"March. If I ain' seriously mistaken it's somewheres between St. Patrick's day an' April fool."

"Well? When is March?"

"When? Between Feb'ry an' June, somewheres. When would you think it was?"

"No—I mean it ain't in summer, is it? Sure it

ain't. It ain't in awdam, is it? No. It's spring, that's when it is—spring—beaudiful spring."

"Have you been outside this mornin'?"

"Don' makes no diff'rents what's it outsides. Spring it's spring if it's snow or it's hot. Spring he comes chust the same. And when he's come he's make people they should be in love."

"You been readin' the funny papers again? Or did you see a buck beer lit'orapht?"

"You couldn' make a nothing out from this," said Gus. "Spring is the time from lovers. A party tells me that what ought to know. She——"

"She?" cried Evelyn. "What woman's been fillin' you full o' that spring bunk, huh? Come through. Some dame is been makin' a play for my Gus—I can see the guilt in your eye."

"Maybe," said Gus. "Maybe sees in my eye some other lady something else from guilt. You know, chust becus I'm ain't so grand by you, it don' mean I'm by ef'ry lady a rummy."

"Who is this here rival? Speak!"

"You should worry," said Gus. "I care for her about so much you care for me."

"Oh, if that's all, then it's all right," said the exquisite, as she ladled herself some more mush.

XLVIX

GUS THE BUS SPEAKS UP

TO EVELYN

HOW HE FEELS ON WAR

"WELL, blunderbus," said Evelyn the Exquisite Checker, "if it comes to war with your native land, which way is my blue-eyed hero gonna flop?"

"What you mean which way?" responded Gus.

"I mean, are you with us or against us? Are you for Germany all over or are you all over with Germany?"

Gus drew close to the checker's stand. He planted his elbow on its eminence, set his feet firmly, looked directly into the countenance of his inamorata, and spoke:

"Listen," said he.

"So long Chermany she fights mit Frantz and mit Engleland and mit Rusher, so long I couldn' be neutrish. Remember—I was geborn in Chermany,

I speak from Chermany the langwich, lives mine mother and mine sisters and mine liddle brother by Schleswig-Holstein, fights mine big brothers for Chermany, and died one from mine brothers and mine own father for Chermany."

"But——"

"When comes it a war where Chermany she hits America, that's diff'rent yet.

"Why I come here, huh? I come here by America becus I'm want freedoms; becus I'm want go where I'm so good like the next feller he is. Well, I ain't yet exac'ly so good like effrybody elses, but that ain' no fault from somebody excep' mineself. Is here plendy opperchunidy. And America dares me I should grab it. Ain't that?

"I'm comed here from mine own free will. Nobody he asks me I should please come by America and see maybe I like the place. I could to stay in Chermany—nobody chases me out from there. But I'm come here.

"Now am I here. Now am I—I'm part from this country. I'm eat her bread and I'm take her money —so much I can get mine hands on it—I'm walk aroun' on her streets like I'm owning them, I'm come

where I like and I'm go where I please, I'm look in the faces anybody—I'm a free guy!

"And now comes a other land—it don' make no never mind what's the land—and she says she makes by us a fighd.

"An' you're ask me which way am I flop.

"I'm tell you which way am I flop. I'm flop for these here Younided States f'm America, first, last, all day long—that's how I'm flop, Missus Efflyn, and you take that and you shtick him in your bonnet."

Evelyn arose, projected her pink hand over the bulwark for Gus to seize, and put her other hand on his proud but slim shoulder.

"Gee—you're a man, Gus," she exclaimed. "You're a patriot. You're the kind o' stuff that this here country is made up out of. I'm proud o' you."

Gus blushed, flushed, and hushed.

"Yes, sir. I was afraid that war, that horrible monster what busts up brothers an' splits out sweethearts an' divides fam'lies might come between us, too. But I was wrong. I done you a injustice. You're the truest, bluest bus in the joint. An' here-

after you ain' no blunderin', flounderin' boob to me no more—you're a American, standin' with shoulders squared an' eyes on the flag, ready to die for the Stars an' Stripes."

"For the Stars an' Stripes—an' for you," said Gus. "For you, Missus Efflyn. The first dooty from a soljer it's to die for the ladies. Didn' you reading what happens by Belgian? I like to see a enemy he comes here an' he gets away with that rough stuff. I bet you I'm kill any Oohlan what he looks on you crost-eyed. Them fellers should come ofer here and they should kill an' they should burn up an' they should make insults our ladies? Not so long I live, Missus Efflyn—no, ma'am."

"Thanks, Gus. I feel safer now."

"You bet you you're feel safeter. We show them loafers when they starting war by America they don't fooling mit no Belgian or mit no Boolgarias, neither. Them bums they don' come and straf no citizents f'm the land o' the free.

"The Chermans is great fighders. There don' give no greater ones. Oh, don' look cross on me—wait till I'm finish. There ain' no greater fighders than the Chermans. But—when comes they ofer here they find plenty Chermans what they gots to fighd!"

L

GUS THE BUS IS READY FOR FRAY

WHERE SOUP IS THICKEST

HOORAY for Hindenburg!" cried Gus the Bus.

"What!" screamed the exquisite checker.

"Look on the calendar—April Foolishness!" chuckled the bus.

And Evelyn slapped him in gentle peeve upon the shoulder and muttered, "You go on, now—you're a fierce josher, blunderbus."

"What I real wanna say," said Gus, when he had recovered from his giggles of victory, "was that I'm bet you Congress makes war by Chermany."

"An' why wouldn' they? Them Dutch is blowin' up our ships like they was toy balloons at a halloween party. An' we been standin' by, like a scared mother tryin' to argue with a bulldog what's tearin' her kid to pieces, tellin' him that he's a nice doggie an'

always was friendly before, so would he please stop in the name o' Christian brotherhood?"

"The Chermans is a bulldog, awright."

"Well, maybe old Uncle Sam is a dog catcher, an' maybe this bulldog ain' got no license—no license to drownd a lot o' wimmen an' children an' sailors an' citizens what's goin' along, mindin' their own business on the high waters. A bulldog, Gus, may be the king o' dogs; but dogs ain't the kings o' creation, at that."

"If comes it war," mused Gus, "I'm be right away enlist for America. It ain't by me no hiffens—no, ma'am. When I'm come by this land I'm come from mine own willingness. America she didn' asked me should I come. An' when I'm here I'm belong. An' I'm do mine part like effrybody elses he's got to do it hisn part. I don' care is it Chermans or is it Englishers; somebody what he's attaxing America, I'm fighd him."

"An' we'll lick 'em, too—good an' s'ficient," chimed Evelyn. "The Dutch may be the greates' fighters on earth. Well, we got plenny o' Dutch to fight 'em with. Wait an' see us muster in the German-American Guards, an' the Teutonic Scouts,

an' the Vaterland Fighters, an' the Prussian Rough Riders, an'——"

"An' the Schleswig-Holstein Shoot-'Ems," horned in the bus.

"You said somethin'. In ev'ry war what this country fought—an' we win 'em all—the Dutch was down in front where the bullets was kickin' the hardest. In this here war, as long as we wasn' mixed up, they was pullin' for the kaiser, an' that was nach'ral enough. But when our Congress says 'War!' it'll be all diff'rent. Them Schmidts an' them Schulzes an' them Meyerses an' them Kunzes an' Schingelbauers 'll line up along that there Atlantic an' along the border where the Greasers hangs out, an' say to King Bill in a langwidge what he'll understand: 'You beat it, or we'll straf you so you'll never be the same.'"

"An' we'll makes a dive after them Oo-boats, too. Was be something soft for Chermany so long she's got only England an' Frantz an' Roosia an' a few more them second-class countries they should fighd with her. But when comes a A-No. 1 conzern like us, is already diff'rent. By us is chust as good under water like up by the airs or on dry land if not sailing on top o' the water."

"Sure. But I wisht we was better p'pared," sighed the exquisite one.

"We oughta be," assented Gus. "We oughta be. An' how I begged 'em a year ago when I wrote that Chack Lait a letter! But they didn' pay me no attentions then. Now maybe they'll be sorrich an' they'll see I was right. But, anyway, soon we're ready. When America she gets excided she rolls up her sleefs pretty kvick, huh? I guess so."

"Are you reely goin' to war?" asked Evelyn earnestly.

"Who? Me? Am I'm reely? Say—to who are you speaking, to who? If comes war I'm go righd away enlist. Didn' you saw last week was a story what the army needs me?"

"Sure—the papers has been full o' stories that the army needs soldiers—troopers, cavalry guys, artillery shooters, inf'ntrymen."

"Yes, yes," said Gus. "But didn' you seen also a story what it says the worst thing them army needs is cooks?"

LI

GUS THE BUS WOULD GO SMILING

IF EXQUISITE ONE WEPT

"SAY—GUS; we better get married, you an' me," heckled the exquisite checker, with dimpling smiles and a laughing light in her eye.

"You should kit me some more—I like it," said Gus the Bus. "Any times you want be married by me it ain't nezzezary you ask me twicet."

"Well," said the charmer, "I see where this here war stuff is stimulatin' trade at the hitchup license window somethin' enormust. Is it becus the boys wants to nail their sweethearts down while they're off at the front, or is it becus they think married men ain't gonna be called to the colours?"

"Bot'," said Gus. "An' the girls, I'm guess, they like to be war brites. A girl what she marries a guy now she thinks she's do somethin' for her country."

"And so she does. It's one thing for a no-good bach to vamp off to fight like he's goin' out on a lark; but it's another for a husband, the head of a fam'ly, to go fort' to defend his nashun."

"Anyways," said the bus, "if I was being a lady, I would marry by a soljer feller. Then I'm get swell postal carts from the trenjes and if is gekilled mine husband sends me the President a letter and I'm frame him in mine parlour."

"You're a cheerful kind of a duck, you are. If you was my husban' an' you went to fight I wouldn' want no framed letters like that. O' course, every soldier takes long chances an' his wife is got to take long chances on losin' her husband. But what good is a letter? You can't get no much comfort out o' that."

"Oh—can't you? You couldn't get comfort out of a letter what it says you gived up your husband he should died for the country? I'm think, next by a live husband hisself, a letter from that kind he's pretty lots comfort an' class, too."

"You don' understan' the nachure of a woman. When she marries a party she don' want no substitutes, an' they ain' no amount o' glory or reco'nition

can take the place o' her man. Women is funny that way. When they marries a husban' they wants him where they can lay hands on him an' make a fuss over him—an' maybe with him—but they wants their husban' when they wants him, not no card o' thanks."

"You mean, then, if you married now a guy you wouldn' leave him go to war?"

"Not at all. I'd not only let him go, but I'd make him go. What I was gonna say is this: A woman don' want nothin' so much, I guess, as she wants her husban'. But at a time like this here she's full o' sacrifice. That's where the woman of her comes in. They ain' nothin' can even up to her for the husban', but she don' let that stand in her way or hisn. She tells him to go on along an' lick the enemies an' she hopes he'll come back. But if he don't—if he don't——"

"Yes—if he don't——"

"Well, she's got to stand for it an' make the best o' life for herself. That's the woman's share o' the war —the doubt, the waitin', the nervous readin' down the lists o' dead an' hurt, the prayin' an' the hopin' an' the lonesomeness an' the fears.

"For the men they's the inspiration o' brass bands, the flags flyin' overhead, the guns boomin', an' the blackguards over in them other trenches not far away to be killed. They's officers to spur 'em on an' battle cries to fizz 'em up. But the woman's end is a dreary game. All she can do is sit an' hope an' call on high for comfort.

"They ain' no redfire in her part. She's did her bit, yes. An' when she asks herself she answers that it's right an' square an' all as it ought to be. Ain't she a American, too? Ain't the country hern as much as anybody's? Oughtn't she kick in with her cont'-bution?

"She ought—an' she does. An' she can take her change out o' that thought an' let it be a husban' to her. An' if she's any kind of a woman with any kind of a soul at all she don' whimper or holler."

Gus, who had listened tensely, raised his towel to his eyes and wiped, without shame, a tear from his cheek.

"Gee," said he, "if I thought some woman—maybe some woman like you—could feel about me like you said, how I could fight for them Stars and Stripes."

LII

GUS THE BUS REJOICES ONE BIG DAY

STAGES HIS OWN CIRCUS

"SAY," said Gus the Bus, "is everything now wars talk till a gink he's get dizzy f'm the noises. What you saying, Missus Efflyn, we go by the tsirkus and forget about Hindenburg and Elloyd Georger?"

"Out o' the mouths o' flatheads an' boobs cometh oft wise-crackin' gab," said the exquisite checker. "If they's anything I adore it's a circus."

Full of peanuts and popcorn, their necks stretched from trying to look three ways at once, dizzy with the riot of colours and woozy from beholding the aërial stunts, Gus and Evelyn returned to the restaurant in time to officiate at the evening meal, and put on their spangles—Gus his rusty alpacas and Evelyn her paper cuffs.

"Don't you start jugglin' beers an' balancin' empties on your nose," said she. "This here circus is catchin'. I feel like I could leap on the back of a horse myself without touchin' a stir-up. This here May Wirth ain't got nothin' on me if I had a little practice."

"I bet you'd look finer than what she does if you was gedressed like her, in them——"

"That'll be all o' that. Where do you get thoughts like them, Gus? Ain't you got no shame?"

"Oh, excuse!" gasped Gus.

"A'right, I'll forgive you. I—I guess I wouldn' look so bad in tights at that, huh?"

"I take half your bet I should be there when you're provin' it."

"Tut, tut, there," she protested coyly.

"Tut or no tutting, ain' none o' them tsirkussers what they got a figger like you got. Gee—you're so—well, kind o' not skinny. What you call that?"

"You mean I'm fat?"

"Oh, no, ma'am. I wouldn' mean nothing so wulgar like that. I'm mean you're nice an' roundish. You're like the girls at home in Schleswig-Holstein. Here in America is lots girls they're all thin like a

stick. At home us fellers we likes see girls they got somethin' to them——"

"Something on them, you mean."

"Well, anyways, maybe it's a stylishish womens shall be weigh 88 pounds. But by me it don' go that way. I'm a man what he's like a girl she got some meat."

"Flatterer!"

The diligent and stumbling Gus proceeded on the highways of his endeavours. His heart was light. He had seen the wonders of the circus and Evelyn hadn't spoken crossly to him all day.

He served her the little private dinner that she usually took at her desk after activities, and he hung around waiting to be kicked or kissed, as her humour might dictate—to be asked to accompany her to the doorstep of her home or to be left flat and empty-handed.

Evelyn munched and sipped and nodded her blond head graciously in acknowledgment of the service, but gave no decisive indications. The pie had been laid before her and the coffee gallantly poured for her. Gus busied himself with a number of nothings, waiting and hoping.

"You still here?" she tantalized, glancing up and seeing him rearrange her sugar from the left of the dessert to the right of the coffee pot.

"Oh, yes—I ain' in no such hurry I should run so long you still here," he said as lightly as he could.

"That's fine," said she. "I was kind o' worryin' about havin' to go home all alone."

"Oh, you shouldn't need it," bounded he. "I'm glad I should be by you comp'ny."

"Saved!"

Gus left her at her door and they shook hands. Evelyn was too keen a diplomat to allow him a kiss this day—he was in high spirits; he might have tried to snatch a second one, and he mustn't be allowed to grow too free.

Gus shuffled home, whispering to himself:

"She could to give me one kiss—it wouldn' hurt her much. Well, anyways, it was a gran' day. Missus Efflyn she smiles me, then we talks a lots together, then I bring her eatings, then I'm go mit her home, then she's shake me the hand; was that some day?

"An' that tsirkus wasn' so bad, neither."

LIII

GUS THE BUS IN ACTION

WOUNDED

WINS THE PLASTER CROSS

"SUFFERIN' Red Cross sisters! What train run over you," cried the exquisite checker as Gus the Bus entered her line of vision.

Streaks of dried blood lined his freckled cheeks. His left eye was closed and its surrounding territory was puffed and clouded. His nose was scratched, his lip was out of focus, his ear was torn.

"Oh, nothing," said Gus, trying to look nonchalant.

"What do you mean, nothin'? You look like you was learnin' the left hind leg of a mule to take a joke, or you was caught comin' out o' the wrong rear door."

"Oh," said Gus. "Does it show on me them few scratches?"

"If you call them a few scratches a riot is a picnic," exclaimed she. "Come t'rough—who dropped a safe on you?"

"It was like these," said Gus, painfully articulating with a jaw that was stiff at the hinges. "I'm coming to the downtown on the street car like efry day. I'm stand on front platform, smoking mine tsigar, not bothering with nobody.

"Gets on a feller what I guess he's got too many dark beers. He looks me on the face and he's making a smiles. 'Ah,' he says, 'shake me the hand, brother —I'm see you're Cherman boy, like mineself.'

"I say him 'I shake you the hand if you want, but you've got mistaken. I ain' no Cherman boy. Maybe oncet I was a Cherman boy, but now I'm a American boy.'

"He's pull back again his hand and he says, 'You're a liar. I could see it on your face you're Cherman. And oncet a Cherman is all the life a Cherman. Hurray for the kaiser!'

"The motorman he stops the car and he takes off the handle from his machine and he says 'One more word like that an' I knock you out f'm under your hat, you spiffy-eyed hyphen.' A other man what he's stand there, a big guy what he looks maybe he's a piano-mover, he says to the motorman 'Lemme have him. I'll hit him on his Dutch nose so hard he'll get a lump on the back of his head.'

"That was for me the call to arms. I t'rows down my tsigar an' I says, 'No, sirs. He belongs me! By you he only insults your country. By me he insults mine country and mineself, too.'

"An I hit that Cherman rummy on his eye.

"Say—that gink he wasn' no child, neither. Right away he slams me on the beezer, I'm seeing funny things. The motorman he starts in, but the piano-pusher he holds him back. 'Leave 'em scrap,' he says.

"So they leave us scrap. Well, this Cherman slob he knocks me down and when I'm fall I'm grab him and he falls on top from me. I begin to bite and to kick and to punching him from underneath where I'm below. And that Prussian, he ain' lazy, neither. He puts his knee in my eye and he yanks me the ear.

"I don' know how long we fight like that, but anyways I turned him over, the loafer, and I begin to give him good. He hollers till runs out efrybody what's in the whole car. But I kick and I bite and I lick him something terrible. Then comes a p'leecemans and he's pull me offen the party an' he wants arrest me.

"'You leave that lad alone,' says the piano-lifter. 'He was insulted by that bum.' An' then he getold

the cop what is happen. The bull he hits me on the shoulder an' he's say, 'Bully f'r you, Dutchy!' An' the motorman cuts in an' he's say, 'Look out, off'cer, you better not call that young wildcat no Dutchy or he'll clean you.' An' the cop, he looks gescared an' he lets me go an' he takes the other feller arrested. That's all."

Evelyn walked out from behind her checking desk, wet her handkerchief in ice-water, and washed the blood from her little hero's face. Out of her purse she produced some black court-plaster and trimmed up the open cuts. She even took a comb from her own coiffure and arranged his bricky hair.

"There," said she, "you look like hell, but mos' all heroes do."

"Is that all?" asked Gus.

"Is what all?"

"You're a grand nurse," said Gus, "but you forget give your pachient the right medizine."

"I git you," said Evelyn, and she kissed him on his swollen lip.

"I should fight efry day for—for America," said Gus.

LIV

GUS THE BUS FEEDS UP ON KISSES *TO ENLIST VERY SOON*

GHEE," said Gus the Bus, "it feels me in Tchicago chust like I was home again by Schleswig-Holstein."

"Are you playin' for a crack on the bean wit' this inkwell, or is that your idee o' comedy?" asked the exquisite checker, with her accustomed delicacy of expression and intonation.

"Comical," said Gus. "I was thinking here how comfitable makes it our burger meister, Herr Wilhelm Hahl von Thompsonburg, for us tsitizens from the 'sixt' Cherman tsity. He don' want even Joffre he should coming here becus maybe it hurts our feelings. He says Champ Clark is a gran' guy becus he's fighting against drafts should be soljers what are gonna fight against our cousins in the fatherland. He says we oughtn'ta send no foods by England

becus that gives them strengt' they should fight Chermany.

"Say—what for a kind Tsentral powers got we here? Chermany, Von Thompsonburg, and Austria—and our burger meister he's the most centralish f'm them all. Some Dreibund!"

"Gus," said Evelyn, "I like the way you spiel. For a Dutch lad you're a pretty fine American. What do you s'pose now they would o' did to Thompson if he was a German mayor an' he said what he said an' done what he done if the sichuation was reversed?"

"Well, I don' know. I wouldn' like to say it what they would to done. But them Chermans is a impachient lot, an' sometimes when they are getting excited they don' stop at violences. I wouldn' say it them would treating Von Thompsonburg rough, but Chermans sometimes is got no sense from humour. Did you notice, maybe, Chermans don' laugh so quick on some subjects like other nations? Huh?"

"We're a long sufferin' lot o' good scouts over here, we are," said she—with a sigh.

Gus went on about his routine affairs, for one can operate small businesses while great thoughts burn within the breast.

Back and forth he plied with the butter, water, finger bowls and side dishes, for a bus must bus whether the nation's life's at hazard or the dove of brotherhood floats without a feather ruffled.

Evelyn, too, bent to her diplomatic tasks of keeping cases on the waiters, punching tickets, and signing official waivers on returned goods and gratis commissary.

The service lulled, then dragged, then ended. The final straggler had surrendered his napkin and tipped his waiter. Gus changed to his street wear and Evelyn slid off the long white paper cuffs of her rank and her servitude.

"Could I maybe to see you home to-day?" he inquired.

"Bet your life," she answered. "In these here uncertain days it's a feelin' o' great relief to be escorted by a good American. I've sort o' lost faith in a good many of our boys. When the Stars an' Stripes has to yank in defenders by the neck it makes me feel kind o' blue, don't it you?"

"Well, I come from a land where the boys is soljers before they get to be men. Over there is conscription all the time. A boy he's born a conscript. They don' get there a chancet to volunteer—ain' no questions asked.

"If now I was in Chermany I'd be in Frantz—or I'd be dead."

"Gus—I don' like to ask you right out, but when are you gonna—when—you know—when are you gonna s'prise me wit' a uniform?"

"Missus Efflyn, I got brothers in the Cherman army. I got couzens in the Cherman army an' navy. My father he was killed with a Cherman uniform an' a iron cross on his breast."

"But you're a American now!"

"I'm a American now. I wanna fight for my country—for America. I'm only now 20 years of old, an' they wouldn' conscript me. But I anyway go.

"I'm yet too skinny. I was over by the recruit headquarters an' they give me a weigh an' they say I'm need eighteen more pounds.

"What makes a man fat, it's happiness an' joy. So—if you gimme a li'l kiss that makes me happiness an' it helps me get fat an' I can sooner get by the army."

"Oh, well," said Evelyn, as she puckered up. "If it's for my country—anything for Ol' Glory."

LV

GUS THE BUS AGREES WITH GERARD

THIS THE BULLY LAND

DID you get what Ambassador Gerard spilled about Germany?" asked the exquisite checker, as she took Gus's arm and they strolled for home.

"Efry word I'm read—in the Cherman papers," he answered.

"Do they still run papers in German?" she exclaimed. "Well, we are a fine lot o' easy boobs in this here land o' the free. Can you see a American or a French guy puttin' out a paper in his own langwidge in Berlin?"

"Yes—oncet. After that he would be the editor f'm the *Heavenly Herald* or the *Devil's Daily*, depending whether he lived a Christian life or not."

"I see where this here Gerard says Germ'ny

was gonna come over here an' kick us around jus' as soon as she chewed up the allies, an' it was a question if we wanted to do our bit now, when we had a chancet, or later when the kaiser wouldn' have nothin' on his mind excep' to stick us for the price o' the war."

"I bet you," said Gus.

"This Gerard party," continued Evelyn, "he says the Dutch hates us all over here, 'specially the German-Americans, becus they didn' go over to fight with Hindenburg an' becus they didn' leap up an' burn down the nation when we thrun out the Dutch ambassadors an' pulled the war."

"He's right," said Gus. "In Germ'ny they hate efrybody what he don' do what they want he should do, if he does what's right or if he does what's wrong. In Germ'ny it ain' no free speech like is here. In Germ'ny you speech what you're told you should speech, an' that's what the kaiser says. If anybody over there he thinks diff'rent, he thinks all alone an' in the dark. If a burger meister there thinks what our mayor here he thinks he quits quick thinkin', because he ain' got left his thinker no more. Chermany it ain' no happy home for thinkers, anyways.

Over there they're telling you what you're gonna do, an' it's all right for the didders, but them what thinks differents, for them it's very unlucky."

"How about the Rikestag?"

"Oh, yes—the Reichstag! Well, of course, in the Reichstag a party he could say what he likes. But it's better for him he don' likes to say it. An' when he gets through saying it nobody don' pay no attention excep' maybe to put him in jail. It ain' like Congress, what they write laws. In Reichstag nobody he could int'duce laws. Only a cabinet feller could int'duce laws. An' the cabinet is all dukes an' printzes, choosed by the kaiser. So I guess f'm them don' come much no laws what the kaiser he don' want it.

"An' nobody he starts no little Reichstags of his own, too. In Germ'ny if more than maybe ten peoples they're together in one room, comes a policer an' he chases them apart. In Schleswig-Holstein, where I'm liff when I was home, efrybody what he's got a servant he's got to have a servant what was born somewhere else, so the Schleswig-Holsteiners they can't live without furreners they know what's going on. The school teachers is sent in from Prussia.

The police is sent in from Prussia. The governors is sent in from Prussia.

"In Germany is a law that anywhere outside Prussia the gov'ment could take from a man a home or a farm an' pay him what the gov'ment wants to think is it worth an' put there a Prussian to live. An' they do that all the time so they get Prussians gescattered all ofer t'rough the outside states.

"The minute it's in the air something funny, right away the policers they station theirself on efry corner an' nobody is allowed to went from one block to the other till is efrything again quiet. The policers is all from the army, an' from somewheres elses. A man from one part of the land he's a policer in a somewheres elses."

"Gee—I don' blame you for comin' to this country," said Evelyn, as they drew up at the steps of her home.

"I shall say so," said Gus enthusiastically. "Here is a guy free an' happich. He could talk what he likes, he could go where he likes, he could even kiss who he likes—if who he likes is willing."

"Oh, all right—after all you suffered——"

LVI

ROOKIE SCHIMMELHAUS

WHO IS HE?

OFF FOR "SOMEWHERE"

PRIVATE SCHIMMELHAUS left last night for somewhere in some state!

His pale eye tried to glisten and his spare shoulders squared themselves manfully as he marched away with a hundred or more other youths from the army recruiting station to the train.

He wore no uniform. None of the rookies was uniformed. The gang trudged along in charge of two non-commissioned regulars, who gave the only hint of military character to the parade.

The boys chatted back and forth. There were no weeping women, there was no band, no flags were waving. It looked like business.

There are laws against giving out information just now regarding movements of troops—any movements of any troops.

No schedule is published of men who come and men who leave. Hundreds are shipped out daily, yet no comment is made and no reporters "cover" departures.

Just what the penalty would be for divulging such data I do not know, but the matter might interest a certain anonymous person who laid himself liable to the punishment, whatever it is.

Fifteen minutes before the train was due to pull out a strange voice, which had called up a certain café and inquired after a certain lady, hurriedly and mysteriously whispered into the ear of the lady a bit of news that caused her to suddenly peel off white paper cuffs, hurriedly say a word into the ear of the proprietor, and seize her hat and coat. A moment later she was out of the door on the fly and on her way in a taxi.

The soldiers-yet-to-be drew up to the station. The sergeants gave a command. They entered in formation.

Just then a taxi flew to the door and a woman jumped out and ran inside the depot.

She took it for the column of rookies on a bias angle. Her blue eyes scanned the double files. Then they lit upon what they sought.

A sergeant who was standing in the way was all but bowled over as the flushed and excited woman dashed upon his men, shoved two or three recruits to this side and that, lunged in and fastened her two arms about the neck of Private Schimmelhaus.

He turned, his cheeks flamed up, his slender shoulders quivered.

"Stay in line, there," called the sergeant sharply.

"You go and mind your own business," said the woman.

The sergeant advanced, then began to smile, and fell back. Private Schimmelhaus looked over the embracing woman's shoulder to his sergeant, frightened and asking with his eyes how many years in Leavenworth would be his for this.

But the sergeant was a regular as well as a "regular." He answered with his eye, too—in a wink.

To the doors of the train she escorted him, whispering warmly and with emotion. To all she said he blushed and stammered and tried to make answer, but he was too full for speech and she was too full of speech for him.

All the soldiers were aboard. Only Private Schimmelhaus remained.

The whistle blew hoarsely. The sergeant ran for-

ward and all but tore the lad from the arms of the vociferous young woman, helping him onto the steps as the train started with a lurchy jerk.

He turned on the platform and waved a bandana as far as she could see him through the darkness.

She returned a waving white hanky.

The train disappeared. She switched the kerchief to her eyes. The tears ran merrily.

She sobbed a little clutching, gulping sob and turned to go. She saw the sergeant still there. He had been watching.

"Y—you know who that was—who you sent to the front?" she blubbered.

"Schimmelhaus is his name; a willing lad, too," said the soldier.

"Schimmel—blazes. That was Gus the Bus!"

LVII

GUS THE BUS WRITES

TO EVELYN

GRAND TO BE A SOLDIER

Somewheres in America.
(I ain't allowed to tell.)

DEAR Missus Efflyn:

Well, I'm nearly a soljer.

Soljering it's ain't nothing like being a busser, eksep a guy he does what he's getold. But to be a busser it's cheap and common, but to be a soljer it's nobel and it's grand.

If course, it ain't so grand outside like what is it inside. I'm mean it's hardish work and plenty tiredness. But inside it's feel fine to know a feller he's getting ready to fight for some stars and stripes.

Calls me here already efrybody "Dutchy." But nobody he don't hold that against me. I think, even, them other soljers maybe kind of like me becus I talk mit a Deutsche axesent. I wanna say you right here, too, it don't give so many in the army what they speaking mit Cherman mistakes in their langwitch, I bet you.

Come here plenty Irishers and Polacks and English ones and Scotchich mens and Greeks and Woppers. But we're all Amerikaners now. When a feller he sloots forty times a day Old Glory he ain't no more something only a United Stateser, huh?

I could throw around now a gun like anything—chust like I uset chuggle plates and treys. When I'm present arms I tell you it's something pretty. You know, I come from soljer peepels; it's by me a gift, anyhow.

Our officirs are they fine mens, only they holler by a guy so he can't all the time know what say them. But I'm get uset by the reglations now so I could look on the face from a corpril or a sourgent and right away I know what means him.

So far I didn't yet do by the guardhouse any time. Say—after a party he slaves like I done under that Shordy the waider he's learn plenty militarich tackticks and what is it to chump on orders.

The boys them says we go soon over by Frantz to fight. Well, if they send us we go, that's all. I'm readich. That's what I comed here for, ain't it?"

Maybe it's go be hard for me to shoot Chermans. I got in the kaiser's army plenny cuzzens and a brother or two left yet. But I couldn't help that. A country is a country, and Amerika she's mine country.

When I'm lift up mine righd hand and I'm swear I be true to the United States I new what was I saying. I meant it, also. And I mean it yet.

If I'm get killed over there by a trenj, I ask you

please you sometimes cry when you think from me. I alwus liked you terrible.

Mit a heart full from that kind thoughts for you, I sign here mine name mit best rekarts and I'm hope you're the same—

PRIVATE GUS, U. S. A.

LVIII

'TENSHUN! CORPORAL GUS

(NÉE "THE BUS")

TYRANNY TREMBLES NOW

Somewheres in a Camps.

MINE dear Missus Efflyn:

I'm congratulating you. Last week makes me mine captain a corporal. A corporal he's a kind from a offizier, only he eats yet with the regler soljers. Anyways, he gots on the sleeve a stripes and he's boss from four to eight mens epsept when is around a sarjent,, then he's keep his face shut.

It's mighdy nice, Missus Efflyn, for a boy what he was geborn in Chermany he should be already in the Amerikaner army a corporal when he ain't hardly in the army yet. Mine couzens and mine brothers and mine father they fight and they many die in the Cherman legions and I bet you from them not a one he's anything more than a privit. In Chermany you gots to be geborn a offizier. In Amerika is it all diffrence; a party here he gets by on what they call it merits.

We're live here mighdy nice. It ain't no cinches, but I seen worser chowings and sleepings than what we got it here in tends

It ain't no much gard dooty becus we got it a big camp and is plendy men here they diveyed the work. I was last nighd corporal from the gard, so to-day I'm off and I got it time I shoult write you a ledder.

We're drill effery day. Say—I could handle now a rifle better than what I could sling a tray, I bet you. And the top sarjent here he's a bedder boss than what Shordy was, that schweine hund, and he don't kick nobody either. When he lets out a bark I tell you effrybody he gets bizzy. Maybe some days I'll be yet a top sarjent, then I bet you I make a few rookers chump sideways, the bubes.

Mine captain he's a fine scouts. When he's made me a corporal he says by me, "Schimmelhaus," he's says, "I'm gonna give by you a distingshun what it ain't many lads your size what they got it. I want to you should learn and study and be a man." It looks him in the eye and I makes a salutings and I'm says: "Captain, in mine heart ain't only one wisht—and he is you shoult be glad you made me a corporal and prout I'm in your company."

The captain he shakes me by the hand and afterward the boys they tell me it was the grandest speech what effer was gemade in our rechermend. I guess they bull me like that becus I'm now a offizier and they want stand in with me good.

Chust the same, it's mighdy nice now I'm a regler and the other fellers and don't no more make monkeys out from me like in the first they done before I was a vetren.

How goes effrythings by the café, huh? Chee, when I'm think some times how you go now home

alone effry nighd—or maybe even worser if you don't go home alone—that's the only thing what it makes me for a second regret if I choined the army.

I couldn't ask from you you shouldn't talk by no other man while I'm away. But I wisht I could, Missus Efflyn, I wisht awful I could.

Anyways, please remember sometimes your buss-boy soljer and if you don't mind, would you please cry a liddle.

From the heart of a fighding man, mit luffings.

GUS SCHIMMELHAUS,
Corporal, U. S. A.







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